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Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4726th meeting

Wednesday, 26 March 2003, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Traoré	(Guinea)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	Chile	Mr. Valdés
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Mexico	Mr. Pujalte
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

Letter dated 24 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/362)

Letter dated 24 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/363)

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03-29520 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

Letter dated 24 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/362)

Letter dated 24 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/363)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, El Salvador, the Federated States of Micronesia, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Kuwait, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Singapore, South Africa, Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam and Yemen, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) and Mr. Mohd Isa (Malaysia) took seats at the Council table; Mr. Nesho (Albania), Mr. Baali (Algeria), Mr. Listre (Argentina), Mr. Dauth (Australia), Mr. Ivanou (Belarus), Mr. Mota Sardenberg (Brazil), Mr. Heinbecker (Canada), Mr. Giraldo (Colombia), Mr. Rodriguez Parrilla (Cuba), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt), Mr. Lagos Pizzati (El Salvador), Mr. Nakayama (Federated States of Micronesia), Mr. Adamia (Georgia), Mr. Vassilakis (Greece), Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), Mr. Acosta Bonilla (Honduras), Mr. Ingolfsson (Iceland), Mr. Nambiar (India), Mr. Hidayat (Indonesia), Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Neil (Jamaica), Mr. Haraguchi (Japan), Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait), Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic), Mr. Jegermanis (Latvia), Mr. Diab (Lebanon), Mr. Own (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein), Mr. Šerkšnys (Lithuania), Mr. Capelle (Marshall Islands), Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius), Mr. Baatar (Mongolia), Mr. Bennouna (Morocco), Mr. MacKay (New Zealand), Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua), Mr. Kolby (Norway), Mr. Stańczyk (Poland), Mr. Sun Joun-yung (Republic of Korea), Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore), Mr. Kumalo (South Africa), Mr. Erwa (Sudan), Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland), Mr. Kasemsarn (Thailand), Mr. Kerim (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Mr. Hachami (Tunisia), Mr. Cengizer (Turkey), Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda), Mrs. Mulamula (United Republic of Tanzania), Mr. Paolillo (Uruguay), Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan), Mr. Alcalay (Venezuela), Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam) and Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, which reads as follows:

> "In accordance with article 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, I have the honour to request the participation of His Excellency Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, in the discussion of the agenda item under consideration by the Council on Iraq, which will start on 26 March 2003."

That letter will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2003/370.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Yahya Mahmassani.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the requests contained in the letter dated 24 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq, which was issued as document S/2003/362, and in the letter dated 24 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Malaysia, which was issued as document S/2003/363.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, at this meeting, and I invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: It is exactly a week since I last had the honour to address this Council. During that week we have all been watching hour by hour, on our television screens, the terrifying impact of modern weaponry on Iraq and its people.

We not only mourn the dead. We must also feel anguish for the living, and especially for the children. We can only imagine the physical and emotional scars that they will bear, perhaps for the rest of their lives.

All of us must regret that our intense efforts to achieve a peaceful solution, through this Council, did not succeed.

Many people ask why the Iraqi Government did not take full advantage of the last chance they were given by the Council, by cooperating actively, wholeheartedly — in substance as well as procedure — with the inspectors that the Council sent to ensure that Iraq was disarmed of weapons of mass destruction. But at the same time, many people around the world are seriously questioning whether it was legitimate for some Member States to proceed to such a fateful action now — an action that has far-reaching consequences well beyond the immediate military dimensions — without first reaching a collective decision of this Council.

The inability of the Council to agree earlier on a collective course of action places an even greater burden on it today.

The Council, which has now had Iraq on its agenda for 12 long years, must rediscover its unity of purpose. We all want to see this war brought to an end as soon as possible. But while it continues, it is essential that everything be done to protect the civilian population, as well as the wounded and the prisoners of war, on both sides, and to bring relief to the victims.

This obligation is binding on all the belligerents. The Geneva Conventions and all other instruments of international humanitarian law must be scrupulously respected. I would recall in particular the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, under which those in effective control of any territory are responsible for meeting the humanitarian needs of its population and are required to maintain dialogue and cooperation with international organizations engaged in humanitarian relief. No one, on either side, must obstruct that relief.

Last week I drew the Council's attention to the dire plight of the Iraqi people, even before these latest hostilities, and the extent of their dependence on the oil for food programme for medical supplies and food distributed under that programme.

The programme has now come to a halt, with some $2.4 billion of supplies, mainly food, in the pipeline. The Council needs to determine how it will adjust the programme to make it possible for those supplies to reach the Iraqi people under the present circumstances and to ensure that food, medicine and other essential, life-sustaining supplies continue to be provided. I am aware that a concerted effort is being made to reach agreement, and I hope that it will soon succeed.

But the conflict is also now creating new humanitarian needs, which the oil for food programme is not expected to cover. We do not yet know how many people will be injured, displaced from their homes or deprived of food, water, sanitation and other essential services. But we fear that the numbers may be high.

As I said, the primary responsibility for meeting these needs falls on the belligerents who control the territory. But the humanitarian agencies of the United Nations are ready to help. Indeed, they have been preparing actively to do so. Even though their

international staff had to be temporarily withdrawn from Iraq, most of them have national staff who even now are at work, bringing what limited relief they can to their fellow citizens. Those brave and devoted Iraqis deserve our profound respect.

I fear that the humanitarian effort required in the coming weeks and months is going to be very costly. We are about to launch a "flash appeal" to donors. I urge Member States to respond swiftly and generously, and not to do so at the expense of victims of other emergencies in other parts of the world, which may be less newsworthy but are no less devastating for the people caught up in them.

This Council has other heavy responsibilities related to this crisis. It needs to determine how it will address the many needs of the Iraqi people, whatever the outcome of the war, and what the United Nations itself may be asked to undertake. For anything beyond strictly humanitarian relief, we need a mandate from the Security Council.

Needless to say, the Council's responsibilities also extend far beyond Iraq. There are many other conflicts that urgently need its attention — not least the conflict that inflames passions throughout the Middle East and colours so many people's attitudes to the Iraqi issue. I mean, of course, the tragic conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, for whom the noble vision of two States living side by side in peace and security, which the Security Council laid out just one year ago, is still far from being realized.

In the last few months the peoples of the world have shown how much they expect of the United Nations, and of the Security Council in particular. Many of them are now bitterly disappointed. Their faith in the United Nations can be restored only if the Council is able to identify and work constructively towards specific goals. I urge the five permanent members, in particular, to show leadership by making a concerted effort to overcome their differences.

For my part, I would emphasize two guiding principles, on which I believe there is no disagreement, and which should underpin all your efforts or your future decisions on Iraq. The first principle is respect for Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. The second, which flows logically from the first, is respect for the right of the Iraqi people to determine their own political future and control their own natural resources.

Let me conclude by saying that we are living through a moment of deep divisions, which, if not healed, can have grave consequences for the international system and relations between States. By your interventions this afternoon in this debate you have it in your power to deepen those divisions, or to begin to heal them. I appeal to all of you to choose the latter course, and to reunite around a new resolve to uphold the principles of the Charter. This is essential if the Security Council is to recover its rightful role, entrusted to it by the Charter, as the body with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

For my part, I am prepared to work with the Security Council, on this crisis as in others, and to assist in any way deemed helpful.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes. I stress this matter, so that the Council can carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver the condensed versions in this room.

As another measure to optimize the use of our time, in order to allow as many delegations as possible to take the floor, I will not individually invite speakers to take seats at the Council table, nor will I invite them to resume their seats at the side of the Council chamber. When a speaker is taking the floor, the Conference Officer will seat the next speaker on the list at the table.

I thank Council members for their understanding and cooperation.

The first speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Iraq, on whom I now call and invite to make his statement.

Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Iraq, a founding Member of the United Nations, is being subjected to criminal, tyrannical, barbaric American-British military aggression. This aggression is killing women, children and the elderly, and it is destroying the lives and future of the people of Iraq, who are the people of civilization — of Sumer, Babylon and Akkad.

Previously, they tried to kill our civilization through a weapon known as sanctions. These sanctions

lasted more than 13 years, during which a whole generation of children and youth was destroyed. Condolences here are extended to you all — the entire world community — and to all those who love peace and security in the world.

The American-British full-scale military aggression commenced at dawn on 20 March 2003. United States President Bush declared at that time that the goal of this aggression was the occupation of Iraq and the change of its political regime. As his Secretary of State, Colin Powell, previously stated, the goal of the aggression was to change the political map of the Middle East region to ensure the interests of the United States and Israel. This constitutes a blatant violation of international law and of the United Nations Charter; it defies the international community and deviates from international legality.

The aggression has targeted, among other things, civilian installations — economic infrastructures, homes, schools, hospitals, mosques and churches in Iraq's cities and villages. It has led to thousands of casualties, including women, children and the elderly. For example, the water and electric facilities in the city of Basra were destroyed. This will lead to a health disaster and to a real crime of genocide.

The Moustansiriya Mosque in Baghdad was bombed, and a popular bazaar in the same city was also bombed today. On 20 and 21 March, the American-British invaders and aggressors dropped more than 2,000 long-range guided missiles. They conducted more than 1,000 daily aerial sorties over all of Iraq's cities and villages, during which they used cluster bombs and prohibited new weaponry, much bragged about, to terrorize Iraq.

It is known that the American and British troops penetrated the demilitarized zone between Iraq and Kuwait after the United Nations Secretariat withdrew the monitors of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM), in blatant violation of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), which provided for the inviolability of borders between Iraq and Kuwait. The Security Council must react to ensure that these borders are respected.

The United States and Britain have deployed in the south and west of Iraq in order to launch their forces against Iraqi cities and villages. However, the Iraqi armed forces and armed civilian units, made up of the great Iraqi people, are fighting honourable and fierce battles against this foul aggression and are confronting it with heroism.

The invaders and aggressors say that the goal of their aggression is the disarmament of Iraq. However, the whole world knows that the task of verifying Iraq's compliance in disarmament was entrusted not to the United States and Britain but to the United Nations itself, through the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In their report to the Security Council on 7 March, these two agencies stated that the inspections conducted during three and a half months did not find any evidence contradicting Iraq's declarations and no evidence of the existence of proscribed activities or items in Iraq. Yet today the whole world is well aware that the real reason for this aggression and invasion is the occupation of Iraq, to recolonize it and control its oil wealth.

The international community is also well aware that the Security Council has not authorized the use of force by the United States and Britain. The international community is aware that resolution 1441 (2002) did not allow the use of force at all. Both Britain and the United States confirmed when resolution 1441 (2002) was adopted that it did not contain a hidden agenda, trigger or automatic use of force. Nevertheless, despite the opposition to war of the majority of Council members, and despite Iraq's cooperation with UNMOVIC — according to its Executive Chairman's declaration — these two countries launched their criminal war against Iraq.

The full-scale Anglo-Saxon military invasion and the hostile, aggressive war against the Republic of Iraq constitute a blatant material breach of international law and the of United Nations Charter, particularly Article 2, paragraphs 4 and 7. It is also a material breach of the relevant Security Council resolutions. All of these resolutions, without exception, oblige United Nations Member States to respect Iraq's sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity.

This colonial Anglo-American aggression is a blatant defiance of the will of the international community and its organizations, all of which have expressed their total rejection of the unilateral use of force, their adherence to international legal instruments and their emphasis on the essential role that the United

Nations has to play in maintaining international peace and security and in suppressing acts of aggression.

This barbaric, colonial military aggression against Iraq constitutes a dangerous violation of regional and international peace and security. The United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, are called upon to condemn this invasion and aggression. They are called upon to work to put an end to it immediately, without conditions. The Council must demand that the American-British aggressors and others withdraw their attacking forces immediately outside the borders of the Republic of Iraq. It must hold them fully responsible for this act of aggression, in accordance with international law. It must impose respect for Security Council resolutions and their implementation, particularly those relating to the lifting of the unjust sanctions against Iraq.

While we thank all the countries, peoples and personalities who have called for peace and for the removal of the spectre of war, we are still hopeful that the international community will be able to impose its will on those who have broken international law. We hope it will find a peaceful solution to spare the world the dire consequences that will come out of that aggression and to prevent that aggression from giving rise to a new era of colonialism. The signs of that are becoming evident through the domination of one Power over the destiny of the world, with its dependent other Power. This will mean the collapse of the United Nations and the current international system.

Allow me before concluding my statement to point out that in the past few days during the period of aggression the Council has been busy considering the humanitarian aspect rather than the act of aggression itself. Is it not strange that humanitarian questions, however important they are, are being discussed before the war and aggression, which are the main cause for the need to consider the humanitarian aspects? Should not the Council pay attention first and foremost to the cessation of the war of aggression and pay attention to the lives of the Iraqi people, who are subjected to killing and destruction every day in barbaric, evil acts of aggression, which cannot be ignored? Is this not an attempt to put the cart before the horse and distract the Council from its main role in the maintenance of international peace and security?

Who stopped the oil for food programme? Who withdrew the inspectors from Iraq? Who withdrew the monitors from the Iraq? Was this not done with the agreement and the blessing of the Council? How could the Council allow itself to be manipulated — and it bears repeating, manipulated — in a matter regarding which the United States and United Kingdom could not obtain a resolution that legitimized the act of aggression.

We hope that the Council will be able to stand up to the machinations that have originated with the United Kingdom and are being implemented by the United States, which can only deceive those who blindly follow those two countries.

Mr. Mohd Isa (Malaysia): Since this is the first time I am speaking in the Council as Chair of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, let me congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for the month and assure you of our full cooperation. I also wish to pay tribute to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Germany, for his excellent stewardship of the Council last month.

On behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, and members of the Council, for again agreeing to convene this open meeting of the Council on the current situation in Iraq. As members of the Council will recall, serious efforts were made earlier this month to avert war in Iraq and we clearly expressed the views of the Non-Aligned Movement at the open meeting of the Council on 11 March 2003. Unfortunately, those efforts failed.

Military action against Iraq has been going on for one week. The relentless assaults from sea, land and air are continuing as we sit here in the Council chamber. While this is taking place, the Council has remained silent until today. While the Council remained silent, stark images of this twenty-first century war are seen all around the world continuously. We have just today seen the image of a market being struck by a missile. Millions who see these images daily must be wondering where the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, stands on this issue. The prompt decision of the Council to hold this meeting today is a welcome development. It should offer some hope to those of us in the international community who remain committed to multilateralism and the central role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. The Non-Aligned Movement strongly maintains that commitment.

The Non-Aligned Movement strongly believes that all Member States should observe and abide by the Charter and the principles of international law in dealing with problems among nations. In this regard, the Non-Aligned Movement has continuously stressed the vital role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and the strengthening of international cooperation. We oppose all unilateral military actions or use of force, including those made without proper authorization from the Security Council. We deplore any unilateral action against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Member States.

The war against Iraq has been carried out without the authorization of the Security Council. This war is being carried out in violation of the principles of international law and the Charter. In this regard, it is highly regrettable that the parties concerned had chosen early in the day to cast aside multilateral diplomacy and take the path of war, while efforts to avert conflict were continuing in earnest. We view unilateral military action as an illegitimate act of aggression. This war should not have been started in the first place. Therefore, it should end immediately. Let us return to the Security Council to find the solution to this complex problem.

The Non-Aligned Movement wishes to reiterate its commitment to the fundamental principles of the non-use of force, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and security of all Member States. We continue to believe that the problem of Iraq should and could be resolved peacefully through the United Nations. We reaffirm our commitment towards achieving a peaceful solution to the current situation and stress the vital role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. We call on the Security Council to use its power and authority, as mandated by the Charter, to revert to the multilateral process in the common effort to resolve this issue.

The Non-Aligned Movement stated last month at its thirteenth Summit in Kuala Lumpur its belief that a war against Iraq would destabilize the whole region and it could have far-reaching political, economic and humanitarian consequences, not only for Iraq but also for the rest of the world. We reiterated this in the Council two weeks ago. We continue to maintain this position today.

With the military activity now escalating in Iraq, we are extremely concerned over the humanitarian situation of the civilian population in that country. There are reports, for instance, that the people in Basra will be facing a serious humanitarian disaster, including shortage of basic needs such as electricity and water, if relief supplies do not reach them in time. We hope that the sufferings of the civilian population can be relieved as soon as possible. While the responsibility for this lies with those countries that initiated military action against Iraq, the international community must also assist the United Nations in carrying out the important task of providing humanitarian relief.

It is important that all parties to the conflict observe human rights and other humanitarian issues such as treatment and protection of civilians. They must respect international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

We strongly believe that all avenues in the peaceful disarmament of Iraq should have been explored. We regret that despite confirmation by the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that Iraq was actively cooperating and that the inspections were producing results, the inspectors were not given adequate time to fulfil their mandate and had to be withdrawn because of the war. We also regret that the inspectors were not allowed to continue with their work, despite the overwhelming calls by the international community, including the majority of the members of the Security Council.

We had welcomed the decision by Iraq to facilitate the unconditional return of, and cooperation with, the United Nations inspectors in accordance with Council resolution 1441 (2002). However, it was unfortunate that the war has now made it impossible for the inspectors to work. We note that the Secretary-General emphasized on 24 March 2003 the importance of the resumption of inspections by the United Nations inspectors.

The Non-Aligned Movement believes that international peace and stability can be preserved, with all States adhering to the fundamental principles of the non-use of force and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and security of all Member States. We appeal to all concerned to

exert all efforts to urgently return to a peaceful solution in enforcing Iraqi compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions. We will continue to work closely with Member States on the appropriate course of action — including upholding the centrality and sanctity of the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter — in addressing issues relating to international peace and security, now and in the future.

The Security Council, as the custodian of international peace and security, has a special and heightened responsibility to ensure that the international world order is based on the principles of justice and international law and not on military might.

Now I wish to speak on behalf of Malaysia.

Malaysia takes the position that unilateral military action undertaken without the support and authorization of the Security Council violates international law and the United Nations Charter. Furthermore, the doctrine of pre-emptive strikes has no foundation in international law. Malaysia views the unilateral military action undertaken by the United States and its allies as illegal and as being tantamount to an invasion of an independent and sovereign nation. What is more, it is a unilateral action taken on a selective basis and premised on tenuous evidence, while a viable mechanism exists to ensure Iraqi compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions. Malaysia is, therefore, compelled to condemn that action.

Malaysia wishes to underline that the pre-emptive use of force threatens the very foundation of international law, making war once again the tool of international politics and of the powerful in subjugating the weak and defenceless. It also erroneously asserts the notion that might is right.

In view of the humanitarian catastrophe that is now unfolding in Iraq, as well as the grave threat to international and regional peace, security and stability arising from unilateral military action, Malaysia calls upon the United States and its allies to return immediately to peaceful but firm methods for bringing about Iraq's compliance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Malaysia joins the international community in underlining the urgency to address the humanitarian catastrophe in the wake of military action. We share the view of those who take the position that the United States and its allies that have initiated military action must bear the full cost of providing humanitarian assistance.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Malaysia for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure.

Mr. Mahmassani (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate you once again, Mr. President, on your wise conduct of the work of the Security Council.

The Security Council is meeting today in an emergency meeting to consider the war being waged by the United States and the United Kingdom against an Arab State, namely, Iraq, as well as the repercussions of that war on the security and safety of neighbouring Arab States and on Arab national security. Since 20 March, the armies and air forces of two permanent members of the Security Council have, without the Council's authorization, been waging an unequal and unjust war against Iraq, which has been a Member State of the Organization since the signing of the Charter.

The ministerial decision adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States on 24 March 2003 in connection with the Anglo-American aggression against Iraq decided the following:

> "To condemn the American/British aggression against Iraq, a State Member of the United Nations and a member of the League of Arab States;" (*S/2003/365, annex, para. 1*)

> "To deem this aggression a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, a departure from international legitimacy, a threat to international peace and security and an act of defiance against the international community and world public opinion, which call for the settlement of disputes by peaceful means and compliance with the decisions of international legitimacy;" (*ibid., para. 2*)

"To call for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the invading American-British forces from Iraqi territory and to make them bear the material, moral and legal responsibility for this aggression." (*ibid., para. 3*)

"To mandate the Arab Group at the United Nations to call for an urgent meeting of the Security Council, with a view to the adoption of a decision to halt the aggression and to secure an immediate withdrawal of the invading forces beyond the international borders of the Republic of Iraq, affirmation of respect for Iraq's sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity, and a commitment by all States not to interfere in its internal affairs." (*ibid., para. 5*)

American and British forces have chosen to wage war at a time when Iraq was actively cooperating with United Nations inspectors. The inspectors themselves stated as much in the Council, saying that they needed a few months to carry out their tasks. In that regard, we once again wish to reaffirm that the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) is the only party authorized to disarm Iraq.

Would it not have been better to wait a few months in order to avert a war that we today watch in agony, sadness and terror? This war will have grave consequences in both the region and the world. It is taking place despite the fact that the Security Council, despite numerous pressures and temptations, has refused to give its approval to a draft resolution that would have provided a mere fig leaf for the waging of an unjustified war.

The waging of war against Iraq today leads us to believe that the question of Iraq was never about weapons of mass destruction. The motive behind the war was to usher in a dangerous era in which absolute power is made necessary in order to implement plans and schemes against the peoples and States of the region, so as to redraw the map of the region in a way acceptable to the occupying Power. This is totally unacceptable and will cause turmoil in the Arab world, and in the Middle East in general.

At this difficult time, when the Arab nation is facing grave challenges, we once again reaffirm that the form of the Arab peoples' political regimes must be decided by the peoples of the region without foreign interference. Any attempts to impose changes on the region, to interfere in its affairs or to control its resources are totally unacceptable. In addition, they will have grave consequences on regional stability, including in the Mediterranean region.

At a time when we had hoped and waited that good offices would bring an end to Israel's occupation of Arab territory and to the Arab-Israeli conflict in accordance with the Arab initiative and relevant international resolutions, we have been stunned to see Iraq invaded and occupied. Now we must deal with two occupations, instead of just one. This will generate violence, extremism and hostility among the Arab peoples. The good relations of Britain and the United States with the Arab peoples depend upon the policies of those two States vis-à-vis fateful Arab issues. Unfortunately, all we see in that connection is negative, biased and not objective.

The real threat to the safety and security of the Arab nation is Israel's possession of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Another threat is Israel's ongoing occupation of the Arab territories, its policy of killing and destruction against the Palestinian people and its refusal to comply with Security Council resolutions.

The current international system, established in 1945 after the Second World War, is in grave danger. The world is fast moving into an arena of frustration and international chaos. The security and safety of weak States are in serious jeopardy. The imposition of the logic of force and domination and the flouting of the United Nations Charter and international law will plunge the world anew into its pre-1939 condition and foment wars that will bring nothing to humanity but tragedy, pain and sadness.

We call upon the Security Council today to shoulder its obligations as the organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. How can the Security Council remain silent while this violent war is being waged before its very eyes? How can the Council turn a blind eye to the devastation, the aggression and the hundreds — nay, thousands — of civilian victims of this war? We call upon the Council to put an end to this war and to urge the immediate withdrawal of the invading forces. That is the Council's responsibility, upon which depends its credibility and, indeed, the credibility of the entire international system, which is collapsing under the multifaceted bombing of Basra and Baghdad.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): It has taken so much loss of human life, such unspeakable horror and terrible destruction; the bloodcurdling terror of millions of innocent people subjected to a horrible campaign of shock and fright, coldly conceived and planned; and hundreds of millions of people crying tears of blood before the fury of a war broadcast live for the Council — to which the nations of the world have given the responsibility of forever protecting us from war — to realize that there is a nation in danger of death and that, if it should turn away, it would have to assume an onerous responsibility before God, humankind and history.

The Council has therefore decided to meet today following the joint request of the Group of Arab States and the Non-Aligned Movement. I am sure you will agree with me, Sir, that it was high time for it to do so. The situation we face today is so serious and fraught with peril for a people and a country whose very existence is threatened; for a region that is already heavily battered and bruised; and for humanity challenged in terms of its very humanity that to do nothing would be tantamount to complicity in failing to help a nation in jeopardy.

How can the use of such extreme, disproportionate and definitive measures be justified when no present and immediate danger was threatening international peace and security and when the inspections instituted by the Security Council for the peaceful disarmament of Iraq were proceeding in the right direction?

How can we characterize the irreparable damage inflicted on millions of children who had already been made sickly and famished by the sanctions that the Council imposed on them? They have been rudely awakened in the middle of the night and kept awake for days, terrorized, stupefied and plunged into a permanent nightmare by explosions of such unbelievable power that they have made us flinch even in front of our television screens and shaken us to our deepest foundations?

While we rightly worry about the effects of televised violence on our children, who can predict the serious trauma and immense suffering of these millions of children who have been robbed of their childhood and their innocence, who have been forever branded by the mark of horror, and who will never forget the unbearable ordeal that, in a split second, turned their lives forever inside out?

Neither they, nor all those who have been demonstrating against this war for months — including here in New York, where we have seen the families of the victims of 11 September leading the peace march because, having experienced it in their souls and in their flesh, they know what man's folly can be — can resign themselves to believing that freedom and security can be bought at such a price. These children will undoubtedly bear permanent scars and their hearts, like those of anyone whose hopes have been robbed, will be heavy with sorrow, bitterness and frustration.

Since the onset of the crisis, Algeria has called for a peaceful settlement of the conflict based on Iraq's full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Only a few days ago, we warned of the dangers and perils that a conflict in Iraq would entail for Iraq itself, the countries of the region and world peace. We wish today to express our immense sadness and grave concern before this terrible ordeal being imposed on the brotherly Iraqi people, who, besieged and bloodied, is meeting adversity with a courage and a dignity that compel our admiration and respect.

We say this with the conviction of those who know from experience that war is always the worst of solutions and that civilians always pay the highest price, as borne out by the unbearable images of hundreds of civilians, including women and children, who have been killed or wounded by the bombing. In spite of censorship, self-censorship and worse, such images have forced themselves willy-nilly onto our television screens.

Algeria profoundly regrets that the inspection missions were abruptly cut short just as they were beginning to bear fruit thanks to Iraq's active cooperation. Algeria wishes to recall that the force to which Iraq is today subject has not been duly authorized and that it does not therefore meet the required conditions of legality and legitimacy. In fact, a precedent of exceptional gravity has been set in international relations, against which the Secretary-General issued a warning on 11 March when he stated that those who would decide to act outside the Security Council would be doing so in violation of the United Nations Charter. Moreover, it is obvious today that the objectives of this war go well beyond those of Security

Council resolution 1441 (2002) and that this is not merely a question of destroying the weapons of mass destruction that Iraq claims not to possess.

For all these reasons, my country fully endorses the resolution adopted on 24 March by the Council of Ministers of the League of Arab States, calling for the immediate cessation of acts of war and the total and unconditional withdrawal of foreign forces. This is a pressing and solemn appeal that can be ignored neither by the Council nor by the coalition that is waging war against Iraq.

It is for these reasons, too, that we reiterate the obligation of strict respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Iraq, reaffirm our full solidarity with the brotherly people of Iraq in their current terrible ordeal, and call for strict compliance with the Geneva Conventions relative to prisoners of war and to the protection of civilian persons in times of war.

It was likewise with regret and dismay that my country learned of the Secretary-General's decision on 17 March to put a halt to the activities of all United Nations bodies present in Iraq. While we understand the security reasons behind this measure, we would point out to the Council that the suspension of the oil for food programme is about to unleash a veritable humanitarian disaster, particularly in Basra, as the Secretary-General himself indicated two days ago.

The suspension of this humanitarian programme will mean neither more nor less than stopping the delivery to Iraq of medicine, food and other humanitarian supplies at the very moment when, deprived of water and electricity and subject to the fury of combat and bombardment, Iraq's civilians need more than ever to be protected, assisted and effectively led.

We therefore call for the immediate resumption of the oil for food programme, which must be administered under the authority of the Council, and only according to the terms of existing signed contracts. It is understood that when the sanctions are lifted, the system in place will have lost its reason for being and that any adjustment to the programme should not prejudice the future or violate the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Iraq. Nor should it violate the principle of the Iraqi people's right to dispose freely of their resources.

When the founding fathers created the United Nations, it was clearly not to create an agency for dispensing humanitarian assistance — as important and as necessary as that can be — in cases of catastrophe and armed conflict. The United Nations was, in fact, designed to realize ambitions and to embody the greatest ideals.

It is, above all, a political organization comprised of nations motivated by the will to work together in taking up the many challenges facing humanity today. The global, transnational nature of those challenges obliges all States, large and small, to unite their efforts and to act collectively and in solidarity to tackle them with success. The United Nations is the institution that embodies our universal conscience, the organization to which all look when there is a threat to international peace and security. This institution is expected to ensure peace, justice and law and to protect the weakest and most destitute. It is a unique forum in which the nations of the world come together to dream and to construct together, through dialogue, collaboration and cooperation, a safer and more just world in which the rule of law is applied to all, in all circumstances.

Therefore it is our duty, the Member States, and that of the Secretary-General — as he has just demonstrated in his statement before the Council this afternoon — to ensure that this Organization, irreplaceable from any point of view, is not sidestepped, marginalized, weakened or relegated to a minor role but, rather, emerges enhanced by the trials imposed by the circumstances. Otherwise, it would lose its soul, and we would all suffer for it.

Today the Council truly stands at a crossroads. It faces a situation of extreme gravity that touches upon its very reason for existence and which obliges it to do all to maintain international peace and security. The Council's responsibility is today greater because this is a question of the unauthorized use of force and because the Council is expected, at the least, to call for the immediate cessation of hostilities and the return to peaceful means for the settlement of conflicts.

Is that too much to ask of the Council, which remains for so many nations, large and small, despite the disappointments and frustrations, the object of our hopes and our will to create a safer, more just world and the last defence against brute force and the law of the strongest?

The President (*spoke in French*): Before I call on the next speaker, I would like to request that, in view of the long list of speakers, all delegations refrain from congratulating the President so that we can hear all the speakers on the list. I again ask all speakers to limit their statements to five minutes, as I asked, so that we can conclude our work within the time allowed. We currently have 72 speakers on our list.

I now call on the Permanent Representative of Egypt.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Once again the Security Council faces a new challenge in the discharge of its responsibilities with respect to the painful circumstances in the Middle East. Those challenges are posed by the ongoing aggression of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian people and their territory and the continuation and increased ferocity of the military operations in Iraq after the failure of efforts to reach the peaceful settlement called for in the Council's resolutions.

Difficult days have passed since the outbreak of hostilities in Iraqi territory. Today we meet to consider the collective action we should take to put an end to the fighting and to resume political action in the framework of international legality with a view to achieving a peaceful settlement to this crisis. That way, we would spare the people of Iraq and the peoples of the Middle East and the whole world the scourge of a war that will bring nothing but destruction, devastation, destabilization and threats to the welfare and security of peoples. It is a war that threatens to reach grave dimensions and to have serious, long-lasting and far-reaching repercussions.

Egypt has participated actively in the various stages of international action on the question of Iraq throughout the last decade. Egypt's approach is based on its firm belief in the need to act within the collective international security system provided for in the United Nations Charter. It is also based on the absolute need to preserve the territorial integrity, unity and sovereignty of Iraq, as well as the territorial integrity, unity and sovereignty of its neighbours.

Undoubtedly, if the international inspection regime in Iraq had been given sufficient time and if all States had maintained the position that peace was possible and deserved going the extra mile within the framework of international legality, it would have been possible for humanity to prevent the painful picture we see today — the picture of the dead and wounded soldiers and civilians, whose numbers will only increase in coming days. The loss of a single victim is a loss to humanity, the loss of a single victim is a seed of resentment and revenge that will continue to haunt succeeding generations, who will have to pay the price of these sad and disturbing developments.

As the genuine representative of the conscience of the international community and the source of international legitimacy, the Security Council is called upon to send a clear message calling for the immediate cessation of fighting in the territory of Iraq and for the attempt to resume efforts to reach a settlement by peaceful means. It is called upon to affirm the inadmissibility of any infringement on the sovereignty of Iraq and its neighbours and to affirm Iraq's sovereignty over its territory and resources. All parties must respect international humanitarian law and the responsibilities that flow from it. We the members of the international community have the common duty to urge the Council to assume its responsibilities swiftly.

At the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the League of Arab States on 24 March, an important resolution was adopted that pays tribute to the advocates of peace. The resolution contained important elements that must be taken into account by the Security Council in its consideration of the question of Iraq and its grave repercussions for international peace and security. Foremost among those elements is the cessation of the aggression, the withdrawal of foreign forces, the reaffirmation of respect for Iraq's sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity and the need for all States to refrain from interfering in Iraq's internal affairs.

The international action for the elimination of proscribed Iraqi weapons cannot ignore the fact that such action will remain incomplete without the full implementation of paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991), which calls for making the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The disarmament of prohibited Iraqi weapons is only one step towards that objective, which must be fully implemented at the regional level, as called for by resolution 687 (1991).

The international community, on the basis of the rule of law and respect for international legitimacy, demands that the Council and its members safeguard the Charter, which rejected war and called for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Resorting to war and

the use of force epitomizes, in our view, the failure of political action aimed at achieving the peaceful settlement of disputes.

I cannot believe that the Council, under any circumstances, would not assume its responsibility under the Charter of maintaining international peace and security. Nor can I believe that the Council would delay acting to put an end to a tragedy that endangers the lives of thousands of people and undermines the foundation of the edifice constructed by the world in order to avert the recurrence of violence and cruel wars.

Finally, if we were to reject war at all costs and also reject peace at all costs, we now have the opportunity to build peace upon a foundation that is clearly based on law and legality and the hopes of humanity, including the right of peoples to live free of weapons of mass or limited destruction.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President, for having called on me to express the position of the Republic of Yemen regarding the invasion of Iraq.

The Republic and people of Yemen support the Iraqi people, who daily — indeed hourly — are tallying victims. We regret this terrible crisis that is causing division in international relations, waged by the coalition States without the authorization or resolutions of the Security Council. We are deeply concerned by the impact that this war will have: the death of thousands of innocent civilians and destruction sown not only in Iraq, but also in the region as a whole. This will open the door wide to extremism, instability and failed security in the countries of the region. We must think very hard in order to avert the repercussions of this illegal war.

Even before the first missile was launched against Iraq, we saw the Security Council divided between a majority that encouraged continued inspections of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, which had already yielded positive results, and a minority that wished to halt all efforts towards peace and push towards war.

We have witnessed the tensions that followed, which caused a clear fissure in relations among States and have marginalized the Security Council and paralysed it in its role of maintaining international peace and security. It has led to a new stage in international relations that is characterized by the violation of agreed principles and the adoption of the politics of force.

The military invasion of Iraq brings tragedy for Iraq and the region as a whole. It also places the future of international relations at great risk. There is not enough time to expound on this now, so I shall merely summarize the position of the Republic of Yemen regarding what is occurring in Iraq.

First, the Republic of Yemen considers the military invasion of Iraq totally unjustifiable, particularly given Iraq's dedication to the principle of implementing international resolutions on the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, particularly resolution 1441 (2002), as was confirmed by the reports of the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Using force against others for reasons other than self-defence and without a Security Council mandate constitutes a flagrant violation of the principles of international law and the Charter.

Secondly, the coalition countries have said that they are determined to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction, under the pretext of implementing relevant Security Council resolutions, while they have not been authorized by the Council to do that. Their refusal to consider Israel's nuclear, chemical and biological arsenal reflects a policy of double standards and shows that there are ulterior motives in dealing with the issues of the region.

Thirdly, the invasion constitutes in form and content unacceptable conduct that is highly risky to international relations. The declared policy to change the Iraqi regime is an act of aggression carried out against a sovereign, independent State that is a Member of the United Nations, and it constitutes interference in its domestic affairs.

A pre-emptive war, based on mere doubts about the intentions of others, leads to chaos that will undermine the basis of international relations. The Republic of Yemen supports the resolutions adopted by the most recent Arab summit, as well as the decisions adopted by the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Arab States that have reaffirmed the need to respect Iraq's sovereignty, political independence, territorial

integrity and the principle of non-interference in its internal affairs. Similarly, the Republic of Yemen supports the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State of Kuwait.

Despite the very precarious situation, we are nonetheless optimistic about the multifarious international consensus against the war in Iraq. But this must be crystallized into a policy to put an end to this tragic war. That is, in fact, the responsibility of the United Nations. It is the United Nations that must determine the commitment of Member States to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter and must ensure respect for international legitimacy.

In conclusion, we should like once again to express our deep concern at what the people and the land of Iraq are being subjected to and we appeal for a halt to the aggression, destruction and blood-letting.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We gather here today in response to a request made by the Group of Arab States in implementation of a decision adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States on 24 March 2003. That decision was issued along with a reservation by the State of Kuwait, because the decision makes no mention of Iraqi aggression directed against the State of Kuwait in the form of missile attacks or of Iraq's violation of relevant Security Council resolutions and of all decisions issued by Arab summits calling for respect for Kuwait's independence, sovereignty and security. Therefore, Kuwait's reservation cannot be attributed to today's Security Council meeting — as can be seen by our active participation in it — but rather to the reasons that I have just cited.

At the outset, I should like to express our profound sadness, anguish and sympathies with regard to the innocent victims — both the injured and those who have died — among the brotherly Iraqi people, and to those among the coalition forces who have fallen as a result of ongoing military operations. We wish solace and speedy recovery to them and their loved ones. This is war; these are its effects. Therefore, Kuwait joins other countries in stating its position that war must be the last option. Recourse to war should be made only after all other means have been exhausted.

The Kuwaiti people, more than others, is fully aware of the effects of the ongoing military operations in Iraq. Those operations have resulted from Iraq's persistent refusal to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions concerning the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. The Council will recall that, in 1990, the Kuwaiti people languished for seven months under a brutal, abhorrent Iraqi occupation that led to murder, torture, the desecration of sanctuaries and genuine suffering as a result of the Iraqi regime's brutal practices. During that bleak period, Iraq, the occupying Power, did not even allow international media or humanitarian organizations — in particular the International Committee of the Red Cross — to enter occupied Kuwait to monitor and convey such suffering to the world through reports and documented images. That situation is unlike what we are witnessing today. Present media coverage of the military operations and of their effects on the Iraqi people is of an unprecedented scope. Therefore, Kuwait urges the coalition forces to continue to take every possible precautionary measure in order to avoid causing human losses and to avoid exposing civilian lives to danger, pursuant to international humanitarian law and to the relevant Geneva Conventions.

With regard to current developments, my country takes the following positions.

First, the State of Kuwait reaffirms that it has not participated and will not participate in any military operation against Iraq and that all measures we are undertaking are aimed at protecting our security, safety and territorial integrity.

Secondly, Iraq, since its invasion and occupation of Kuwait in 1990, has continued its aggressive policies against Kuwait, its people and its Government. The most recent of such practices is the launching of Iraqi missiles against inhabited civilian areas in Kuwait since 20 March. Iraq's missile attacks have continued until today, which reaffirms the appropriateness of the defensive measures taken by Kuwait, by fraternal countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and by other friendly countries to protect Kuwait's security, sovereignty and stability.

From this rostrum, I salute the forces of the Al-Jazeera Shield, composed of forces from the Gulf Cooperation Council, which have come to Kuwait to help it protect its security and stability and to stand side by side with its armed forces and those of other

friendly countries. We believe that Iraqi attacks against civilian targets in Kuwait constitute a flagrant violation of the Charter of the League of Arab States and the Charter of the United Nations. We call on the international community and on the Security Council to condemn these attacks, to demand that Iraq immediately put an end to them, and to stress the need to respect Kuwait's security, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Moreover, these Iraqi attacks involve many important considerations.

First, the Iraqi Government is trying to drag Kuwait into the war and to compel it to participate in these operations. However, Kuwait will not be drawn in by desperate Iraqi attempts aimed at achieving such an objective.

Secondly, the missiles that Iraq is aiming against Kuwaiti civilian areas have a range that exceeds 150 kilometres. Some of these missiles have landed on residential areas in Al-Fuhayhil city in southern Kuwait, which is irrefutable proof that the Iraqi Government possesses proscribed missiles whose range exceeds that allowed by Security Council resolutions. That proves the invalidity of the Iraqi Government's earlier claims that it does not possess such missiles.

Thirdly, Kuwait reaffirms that its position on the ongoing military operations against Iraq is in conformity with relevant Security Council resolutions and with the legal obligations on Iraq that proceed from them. This fact has been totally flouted by the Iraqi Government. Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) also included a clear warning to Iraq that it would face grave consequences if it remained in breach of these decisions. Kuwait reiterates its unequivocal position, declared before the Security Council in previous meetings, that the Iraqi Government bears full responsibility for the grave consequences confronting it now.

All members of the international community have called on the Iraqi regime to try to avert reaching this stage, cognizant as they were of the decisions of international legitimacy, which authorize, according to Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, the adoption of all measures to ensure Iraq's observance of relevant Security Council resolutions and ending Iraq's defiance of those resolutions. Some brave and sincere initiatives have been submitted to the Iraqi leadership aimed at sparing the Iraqi people the suffering they are facing today, yet the leadership rejected all of them.

Fourthly, the images recently displayed by the media of coalition forces' prisoners of war (POWs) taken by Iraq, including the inhuman treatment of the POWs by parading them before the media, prompt us to again express to the Council our grave concern for the fate of the Kuwaiti prisoners and nationals of third countries who have been detained by Iraq since 1990. We call on the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) to intervene promptly with the Iraqi Government and to demand that it respect the principles of international humanitarian law, especially the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, and to disclose the fate of our prisoners as soon as possible, pursuant to relevant Security Council resolutions.

Fifthly, Kuwait calls on the Security Council to focus on the future situation of the entire population of Iraq and to attempt especially to avert a humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq and elaborate a speedy plan that ensures fulfilment of the humanitarian requirements of the Iraqi people and ensures their right to a decent life. In this regard, we support the proposals and other ideas submitted by the Secretary-General to the Council and presently under consideration, including amendment of the oil for food programme. Kuwait calls for granting the Secretary-General the necessary authority to lead this urgent humanitarian task.

Sixth, the Government of Kuwait has elaborated a comprehensive plan to extend all forms of humanitarian assistance to our brothers, the people of Iraq, directly and through the United Nations and its humanitarian agencies, as well as the other humanitarian organizations. Under these circumstances, Kuwait has established a centre to provide humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people. Kuwait has also provided financial assistance in the amount of $5 million to a number of humanitarian agencies, including the ICRC, the World Food Programme and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In the coming days, Kuwait will announce more contributions to finance the humanitarian activities of other agencies in Iraq in response to the appeal of the Secretary-General.

Seventh, Kuwait is keen to preserve the wealth and national resources of Iraq and to thwart the

desperate attempts of the Iraqi regime to create an environmental catastrophe in the region. Kuwait has dispatched a specialized team from its oil ministry to Iraq to extinguish a number of oil wells that Iraqi forces intentionally ignited in the Rumailah oil field. Two days ago the Kuwaiti team successfully extinguished the fires in one well and currently is working to extinguish fires in other wells.

It is regrettable that the Iraqi Government destroys the potential and wealth of the Iraqi people rather than preserve and develop such resources. It is well known that the Iraqi regime has many precedents. Before withdrawing from Kuwait in 1991, Iraq burned more than 700 oil wells in Kuwait, causing an environmental catastrophe whose consequences Kuwait and other countries in the region still suffer from. It is also regrettable that the Iraqi authorities continue to plant mines in the waters of the Gulf to prevent the use by coalition forces of the harbour of Umm Qasr and to hinder the arrival of humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people in southern Iraq, rather than to facilitate such assistance.

There is no doubt that such practices confirm the conviction of the international community that the Government of Iraq is oblivious to the suffering of the Iraqi people and that its main purpose is to stay in power at any price.

As it confronts these momentous challenges in Iraq, either with regard to establishing peace and stability, or to fulfilling the now urgent humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people as they undergo their current predicament, the Security Council must overcome its divisions and unify its ranks. The Council must set as its objective the interests of the Iraqi people and all that is necessary to bring about their security, stability and development and to compensate for years of deprivation, torture and displacement. History will then credit the United Nations with its expected role in Iraq, as it acts in conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Own (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having promptly granted the request to hold this meeting to discuss a grave situation in which international peace and security are threatened because of aggression against the people of Iraq.

First, I express my respect and admiration for the resisting people of Iraq, who are fighting courageously in these critical moments of their history and the history of the Arab region. At a time when there would be repercussions in the Middle East, it is regrettable that the few and poorly armed people of Iraq would be targeted by powerful nations on an unprecedented scale, by air, ground and sea attacks and by advanced conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

There has been continuous daily bombing of cities, villages and the infrastructure of the Iraqi people, with many innocent civilian casualties. We see this on all television stations except those of the aggressor States, which are hiding what is going on and providing erroneous information, although they pretend to be defending freedom and democracy.

At the beginning of this aggression, which went outside the scope of international legality, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, as well as Security Council members, said that it was a sad day for the United Nations and the international community. Millions of people around the globe shared this feeling of disappointment. This war has frightened them and touched their souls. It is a sad day that the international community is experiencing. One of the major States of the United Nations has violated the collective spirit; collective legal efforts were abandoned. This Organization, established by our fathers and our grandfathers, has become marginalized, even though it has been the place to settle disputes through peaceful means. It is clear that substantial damage has been done to the United Nations and its institutions, and it will be in a difficult state for a long time.

The evil aggression that is being conducted by the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as a small number of other allied nations, against an independent and sovereign State that is a Member of the United Nations constitutes a flagrant violation of all laws and international norms. It is a blatant violation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and it disregards all the efforts of the institutions that are responsible for maintaining international peace and security, including this Council. The resolutions that have been adopted — most

recently resolution 1441 (2002) — do not authorize the use of force against Iraq. Moreover, this was explicitly stated by the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom when the resolution was adopted. They stated that resolution 1441 (2002) did not stipulate automatic use of force and that they did not have hidden motives except the disarming of Iraq.

It became clear to everyone that the objective was not to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction, for this had already been realized and confirmed by the chiefs of the inspections teams in statements and in reports and, in particular, in the work programme. The two States declared that regime change in Iraq, establishing freedom and democracy and respect for human rights, was the main objective. So, we wonder whether it is legal to commit aggression against another State and to change its regime. How can freedom and democracy be carried out with missiles and bombings that destroy all civilian institutions and facilities in Iraq and cause hundreds of deaths, including women, children and the elderly? This aggression has torn and destroyed their bodies, their homes, their schools, their hospitals, their towns and their villages. Is this democracy? Is this the freedom we hoped for at the start of the twenty-first century?

Who are the great Powers on whom the international community has bestowed the right and responsibility to maintain peace and security and the right of veto? How can this privation and these killings be justified? How can we make sure that the rights to life, security, food, health services and water are respected? Is it reasonable to stop programmes that have been established by the international community to provide the Iraqis with their essential needs for survival? How can we justify stopping the oil for food programme without a decision by a legal body, the Security Council in this instance? Is it wise to conduct a war unequalled in scope and in destructive capacity? Is it reasonable to just provide humanitarian assistance to the victim and let it go at that? Should we not demand that this unjustified and destructive war be stopped immediately, since it is against international legality? Is it not just to demand the withdrawal of all forces from Iraqi territory and to compensate the Iraqi people for the destruction and killing?

The people of Iraq do not need the humanitarian assistance that is being requested by some of the coalition States that are trying to provide it from the wealth and resources of Iraq, although they have stopped the oil for food programme. The people of Iraq have refused to head off towards the camps that have been prepared in the border regions of their country. Iraqis who live outside their country are returning to their country to defend it. They are not living in the so-called freedom camps that the aggressor States thought they would fill with millions of refugees.

We see a clear connection between these evil designs against Iraq and the tragedy that is taking place in the Arab world, ignored by the aggressor States. I am talking about the killings perpetrated by the Zionist occupying forces in the occupied Palestinian territory. These are killings of an unarmed people by an occupying State that has highly sophisticated weapons that it uses against civilians. Dozens are dying daily and these so-called democratic States do not lift a finger. It is protected by the aggressor State, which uses the right to veto in the Council, therefore making it impossible to take any measures against Israel, including the implementation of resolutions, the withdrawal of occupying troops from the Palestinian territories, allowing the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination and establish an independent State on its territory. It is ironic that the invading States are calling for the implementation of the Fourth Geneva Convention on prisoners of war in spite of the illegality of this war, even though these same States reject the implementation of the Convention on the Palestinians' territory. The right of veto has been used by these States within the Security Council to block the adoption of a resolution calling for the occupying Israeli State to follow the Fourth Geneva Convention and to protect the Palestinians from daily killings.

We point out that 11 Council members were opposed to military action; 116 Non-Aligned Movement countries and 57 countries from the Organization of the Islamic Conference were all opposed to the use of force, because it represented a threat to their States and to international peace and security.

My country, as the current President of the 119th session of the Council of Ministers of the Arab League, categorically states that we support our Council of Ministers resolution. We are asking the Security Council to condemn this aggression against the people of Iraq, to stop the aggression by all available means, to ask the invading countries to withdraw their troops immediately and unconditionally, outside of Iraq's

international borders, and to confirm the sovereignty of Iraq, its political independence, its unity and territorial integrity.

The people of Iraq must be able to choose their future under their own sovereignty and in their own national interests, so that they can maintain their wealth without interference in their internal affairs in order that peace, security and stability can be restored in Iraq and all countries in the region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Ethiopia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia and Zimbabwe in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item of the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objections, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Stagno Ugarte (Costa Rica), Mr. Kmoníček (Czech Republic), Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia), Mr. Nakayama (Federated States of Micronesia), Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia), Ms. Novotná (Slovakia) and Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 26 March 2003 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2003/372 and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council to be held today, Wednesday, 26 March 2003, on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the current debate in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 26 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "In my capacity as Chairman of the Islamic Group, I have the honour to request that Ambassador Mokhtar Lamani, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, be allowed to participate in the debate in the Security Council on the item entitled 'The situation between Iraq and Kuwait', in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure."

That letter will be published as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2003/371.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to His Excellency Mr. Mokhtar Lamani.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Lamani to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, and the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area Iceland declare that they align themselves with this statement.

With the beginning of the military conflict in Iraq, we are faced with a new situation. Our hope is that the conflict will end with the minimum loss of human life and suffering.

At the meeting of the European Council on 20 and 21 March, the European Union heads of State and Government addressed the common challenges we face.

The European Union is committed to the territorial integrity, sovereignty, political stability and full and effective disarmament of Iraq on all its territory, as well as to respect for the rights of the Iraqi people, including all persons belonging to minorities.

The European Union believes that the United Nations must continue to play a central role during and after the current crisis. The United Nations system has a unique capacity and practical experience in coordinating assistance in post-conflict States. The Security Council should give the United Nations a strong mandate for this mission.

We urgently need to address the major humanitarian needs that will arise from the conflict. The European Union is committed to be actively involved in this field, in accordance with established principles. We support efforts based on proposals by the Secretary-General to adapt the oil for food programme to changing circumstances so that it can continue to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people.

We want to contribute effectively to conditions allowing all Iraqis to live in freedom, dignity and prosperity under a representative Government that will be at peace with its neighbours and will be an active member of the international community.

On the regional front, the European Union expresses solidarity with and stands ready to assist those countries that are faced with problems and risks as a result of the conflict, including possible refugee flows. The European Union will actively engage in supporting regional stability. We call on all countries of the region to refrain from actions that could lead to further instability. The countries of the region have also a particular responsibility to prevent acts of terrorism.

The European Union will continue to work actively towards the reinvigoration of the Middle East peace process through the immediate publication and implementation of the road map as endorsed by the Quartet.

We will deepen our dialogue and cooperation in all fields with the Arab and the Islamic worlds. We hope that it will soon be possible to use the considerable opportunities offered by the Barcelona process to good account.

We reiterate our commitment to the fundamental role of the United Nations in the international system and to the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and stability.

We will continue to contribute to the further strengthening of the international coalition against terrorism. Finally, we will also intensify work for a comprehensive, coherent and effective multilateral policy of the international community to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Hidayat (Indonesia): Indonesia has joined countries that have asked for the convening of the present meeting of the Security Council to address the current critical situation in Iraq.

Some seven days after the virtual abandonment of the multilateral path by the United States of America and its allies, Governments and peoples around the world have been witness to the immense and intolerable sufferings that have been inflicted on the people of Iraq. Our collective conscience demands that the aggression be immediately stopped.

For some weeks now we have been agonizing over the very future of the United Nations system, which has been sidelined by the wilful unilateral action of the powerful, and whose authority has been undermined. Our shared interest in a world order that respects equality among nations and the primacy of multilateralism, as reflected by the United Nations, demands that unilateralism be immediately checked. And during those same weeks, all of us have pondered the multidimensional consequences of the war for the Middle East region and beyond.

Our shared commitment to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war demands that the United Nations should not stand idle.

It is for these reasons that Indonesia has demanded the convening of the present meeting and commends the President of the Council for making it possible. The very fact that the Security Council is meeting today is a step in restoring its authority. Indeed, much more is at stake than the fate and the future of the nation of Iraq.

Indonesia has strongly deplored the unilateral action by the United States of America and its allies, who have decided to launch a military attack against Iraq in contravention of international law.

Like others, the Government and the people of Indonesia have been witnessing with profound sadness the humanitarian toll and intolerable suffering that have been inflicted on thousands of innocent and vulnerable civilians in Iraq. At this stage in the conflict, we are already witnessing with profound concern rising casualties among the combatants on the ground, which all of us fear will continue to grow as the military confrontation intensifies. As we meet today, we face the ever alarming prospect that the fighting will spiral out of control.

Even if the fighting were to end today, we would already have a grave humanitarian crisis on our hands. According to information in the hands of the United Nations in that respect, there are already 300,000 internally displaced people in the north of Iraq. Similarly, the United Nations Children's Fund reports that in Basra there is no electricity and that the water supply has been interrupted. This suffering is being inflicted on a people who have for many years now endured the hardships of sanctions.

However, in our justified concern to immediately and collectively address the grave humanitarian situation in Iraq, we should not lose sight of one important fact: the countries that have chosen the path of war in disregard of the once ongoing process within the Security Council bear a special responsibility to address the unfolding humanitarian suffering resulting from their action.

Beyond the humanitarian implications on the people of Iraq, the very territorial integrity and national sovereignty of that country have been put at great risk. The Government of Indonesia has consistently emphasized that any solution to the question of Iraq should respect the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of that country.

The international community should not lose focus of what has been, and continues to be, the central problem, namely, the issue of disarming Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) provided a clear road map to effectively address that issue through the inspections regime. Indonesia has been steadfast in its principled position against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We have therefore consistently urged Iraq to comply with its obligations under that resolution. We were encouraged by the report given by Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, namely, that the inspection process was making progress and should be continued. Hence, diplomacy, combined with judicious pressure, was yielding results.

We should not, and cannot, underestimate what is presently at stake. The fate of the people of Iraq is certainly at stake. The future of neighbouring regions and of those beyond — politically, strategically and economically — are most definitely at stake. Nor can we be oblivious to the potential environmental impact of the war. Ultimately, however, it is the very foundation of the United Nations system and its inherent principle of multilateralism that are being tested. Unilateralism, from whatever source, must be held in check.

The Security Council must, and must be seen, to be seized of an issue that is in fact preoccupying all of us, Governments and peoples alike. Its silence with no call for an immediate cessation of the aggression is deafening indeed. Indonesia hopes the Council will not fail to shoulder its Charter-mandated responsibility to maintain international peace and security. The Council must unite and join the clarion call emanating from many councils of nations, and being voiced by peoples the world over, to end the war.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of South Africa, on whom I now call.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): The moment we had feared has come to pass. Iraq is in the midst of a bitter war. Some States have come together to invade Iraq without the authorization of the United Nations. This unilateral resort to force is compounded by the fact that progress was being made in dealing with the disarmament of Iraq through inspections authorized by the Security Council.

We regret this war, as do millions of people around the world. We recall the position of the African Union and the Non-Aligned Movement that war is not a solution to the world's problems. We reaffirm the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, and believe that the people of Iraq must be allowed to determine their own future and freedom.

Now more than ever, the United Nations must play a central role in securing an end to the war. The United Nations is the primary institution that gives legality and legitimacy to our collective efforts to secure peace and security in the world. The fear is that

despite optimistic expectations, this war may result in an unwanted occupation that will further complicate the achievement of peace and stability in the entire region.

The war in Iraq must not be allowed to lead to the erosion of the principles and values that are contained in the Charter of the United Nations. For more than 50 years, the international community has relied on the United Nations to address disputes and promote peace and security in the world. Imperfect as it may be, the United Nations is the principal institution governing the international political system, and endows legality and legitimacy on our actions.

It is for that reason that we agree with the Secretary-General that

> "Perhaps if we had persevered a little longer, Iraq could yet have been disarmed peacefully, or — if not — the world could have taken action to solve this problem by a collective decision, endowing it with greater legitimacy, and, therefore, commanding wider support, than is the case now." (*SG/SM/8644*)

As a country that voluntarily disarmed itself of weapons of mass destruction, South Africa strongly believes in a world free of all weapons of mass destruction. Ideally, we believe that no State should possess such weapons. We therefore made every effort to ensure that Iraq fully implemented all relevant Security Council resolutions, including 1441 (2002). It is for this reason that we agreed with the weapons inspectors when they indicated that they needed more time — "months not years", to quote Mr. Blix — to assure the world that Iraq is free of weapons of mass destruction.

The tragedy of the war in Iraq is that it continues to produce civilian and military casualties. Although we may disagree on the need for this war, we cannot ignore its casualties. The Security Council has a role to play in ensuring that provisions are in place to assist with the delivery of humanitarian relief to the Iraqi people. We would wish to caution the Security Council from being drawn into drafting a resolution that would provide tacit or implied approval of the military operations that are under way in Iraq at this time.

The Security Council must pass a resolution on humanitarian assistance that upholds the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and ensures that the natural resources of Iraq remain in the hands of the people of Iraq. South Africa believes that the open-ended and punitive sanctions that the people of Iraq have been forced to endure for more than 12 years must come to an end.

As an interim measure, the oil for food programme is important for the people of Iraq. According to the Secretary-General, 60 per cent of the 27 million citizens of Iraq depend on the programme for daily sustenance. We agree that this programme could be adjusted to ensure that the humanitarian goods that have been ordered by the Iraqi Government are delivered. It is also appropriate to prioritize the delivery of essential medicines and food from the existing contracts and to ensure that the most urgent needs of the Iraqi people are addressed.

The war in Iraq should not destroy the foundation of the rules-based system of collective security with which the United Nations and its Charter provide us. The founders of the United Nations sought to bring predictability to international governance. They envisaged a world order in which the lives of the innocent and weak would be protected, and not one that is premised on military might and the law of survival of the fittest. The United Nations is more relevant than ever in a world confronted by complex challenges. There are places all over the world where peace must be won. Iraq is no exception.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The aggression of the United States and the United Kingdom against Iraq deserves strong condemnation and should be stopped immediately. The Security Council should fulfil its primary responsibility in the restoration of the international peace and security that have been shattered by this act of aggression.

The United Nations, including the General Assembly, must exercise all the powers and functions entrusted by the Charter to guarantee peace, security and the political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, Kuwait and all the States of the region; to protect the Iraqi people and re-establish the implementation of international law and international humanitarian law, particularly that of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I; and to

ensure respect for the human rights of the Iraqis, especially their right to life.

We all had hopes, but we all knew this would be the outcome. More than two thirds of the members of the Security Council and three of its permanent members tried for weeks to avert war, noted its potential consequences and offered diverse solutions inspired by two premises: that any unilateral attack would be a violation of the Charter and international law; and the necessity of the complete implementation by peaceful means of the relevant resolutions of the Council itself.

Nevertheless, the inspections were suspended when tangible progress was being achieved. We duly noted the risk that the scope of resolution 1441 (2002) would be manipulated or distorted and we were sceptical about the public assurances given then by those who later started the war.

In reality, Iraq had been sentenced long before. We know that Iraq neither offers nor is able to offer the slightest threat to the national security of the United States or its allies. Rigorous analysts have submitted evidence that the attack against Iraq had been planned even before the criminal terrorist act of 11 September against the twin towers.

President Fidel Castro has addressed the causes, pretexts and factors of the crisis and offered solutions, particularly in his speeches of 28 January; 14 and 25 February; 6 and 22 March. In Kuala Lumpur, our President stated:

> "In his speech to the graduating cadets of West Point on 1 June 2002, the United States President stated: 'Our security will require transforming the military you will lead — a military that must be ready to strike at a moment's notice in any dark corner of the world.'
>
> "That statement was not made by the Government of a small and weak nation, but by the leader of the richest and mightiest military Power that has ever existed, the same that possesses thousands of nuclear weapons — enough to obliterate the world population several times over — and other fearful conventional military systems and weapons of mass destruction.
>
> "That is what we are: 'Dark corners of the world'. That is the perception some have of the third world nations. Never before had anyone offered a better definition.
>
> "The former colonies of Powers that divided the world among them and plundered it for centuries constitute today the group of underdeveloped countries. There is nothing like full independence, fair treatment on an equal footing or national security for any of us; none is a permanent member of the Security Council with a right of veto; none has any opportunity to be involved in the decisions of the international financial institutions; none can keep its best talents; none can protect itself from the flight of capital or the destruction of nature and the environment caused by the squandering, selfish and insatiable consumerism of the economically developed countries.
>
> "After the last world carnage in the 1940s, we were promised a world of peace, the reduction of the gap between the rich and the poor and the assistance of the highly developed to the less developed countries. It was all a huge lie. An unsustainable and unbearable world order was imposed on us. The world is being driven down a dead end."

It is necessary to halt this course of events if we want to survive — Europe and the developed and developing countries, without exception — as sovereign and independent States; if we want to preserve peace and the collective security system that cost humankind 50 million deaths and hundreds of thousands of lives to the United States people; and if we want to defend the already precarious existence of the United Nations as a main element and symbol of multilateralism.

Cities are not "secured" but destroyed by bombs; precision-guided ammunitions do kill and mutilate civilians and traumatize millions of people terribly. All prisoners deserve humane and honourable treatment and are protected by the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocol I. International humanitarian law should be totally and universally implemented and respected.

The priority now is to stop the bombing of and aggression against Iraq. It is also a priority to protect and provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the civilian population, for which the United Nations and its Secretary-General have all the necessary powers.

Nevertheless, we cannot accept that the aggression and the occupation of territories should be legalized or endorsed under humanitarian pretexts, which would serve only to encourage war and would essentially distance us from the ceasefire and from those very humanitarian principles and objectives that have been declared.

The Security Council and the Secretary-General must be extremely careful in their mandates and responsibilities. Nothing should be done against the political independence and sovereignty of Iraq or its territorial integrity. The aim of the United Nations is now to achieve a ceasefire and to stop the aggression, not to speculate or to do anything under the pretext of being anticipators able to validate an eventual Anglo-American occupation Government in Iraq, or whatever it may be called, nor to invent in advance United Nations mechanisms on the ground or procedures to commit those who opposed war to undertake the costs of a distant and unpredictable reconstruction.

The main thing is to do the impossible to stop the death and destruction and to achieve the end of the war and the withdrawal of the invading forces from the occupied territories. Public opinion, that extraordinary and booming force, shall be severe in the judgement of our conduct.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. MacKay (New Zealand): The New Zealand Government deeply regrets the breakdown of the diplomatic process and the hostilities that are now under way. While we acknowledge the endeavour to avoid civilian casualties, the loss of life on both sides is of deep concern. It is also essential that the Geneva Conventions be adhered to by all parties.

But our immediate focus now should be to the future. Our common objective must be to end hostilities as quickly as possible, so that the risks to the Iraqi people are minimized and so that their humanitarian needs can be met. Those involved in initiating the military action appear to have acknowledged their responsibilities in this respect in their planning. The broader international community needs to respond urgently to the United Nations call for humanitarian relief funds. New Zealand has already announced a contribution to relief agencies, and we are looking at other ways we can help as needs and means become clearer.

The Security Council must move to resolve practical issues relating to the oil for food programme in these circumstances. The programme needs to continue to operate effectively. The Secretary-General has made proposals for its continuing effectiveness, and the Council should work quickly to reach an agreement on this.

This has been an extremely divisive and difficult period for the Council. We want to see it now set aside those differences and focus on the welfare of the Iraqi people. There will be a challenging period of reconstruction in Iraq ahead. It will be in the longer-term interest of us all to see the United Nations itself fully engaged. The United Nations has the experience to contribute and to help define the international architecture for the delivery of humanitarian and reconstruction assistance. Member States will expect the Council to work cooperatively to facilitate United Nations involvement.

New Zealand will, of course, work with others in the United Nations to assist with this humanitarian and reconstruction response.

The President (*spoke in French*): I would like to inform the Council that the present meeting could continue until 9 p.m. unless the remaining speakers follow the example of the representative of New Zealand. I give the floor to the Permanent Representative of India.

Mr. Nambiar (India): I shall try. This meeting will represent the first open debate in the Security Council on Iraq since the outbreak of hostilities on 20 March 2003. We thank you for providing the general membership of the United Nations with an opportunity to communicate their views on this most critical issue involving international peace and security.

The situation relating to Iraq has evolved rapidly over the past few weeks. India's position advocating a peaceful resolution of this issue has been consistent and is well known. The peace and prosperity of that region is as vital for India as for any other country, given our long-standing political, cultural and economic ties with the countries of the region.

India recognized the validity of the unanimous decision of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002), which provided for the disarmament of Iraq. The resolution also reaffirmed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, Kuwait and the

neighbouring States. Resolution 1441 (2002) provided a stringent regime of inspections designed to meet the international community's desire to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction.

We believe that securing Iraq's cooperation with the inspections process and its compliance with all relevant Security Council resolutions should have been the main focus of the Council's efforts. That, unfortunately, did not happen. As it is, we are now presented with a situation in which some members have decided to proceed unilaterally.

My country received reports of the commencement of military action in Iraq with the deepest of anguish. In the circumstances, we sincerely hope that the military campaign, which was unjustified and avoidable, will be short-lived. We strongly urge that all possible efforts be made to bring hostilities to an early end. We also call upon all parties involved in the war to meet their obligations towards civilians under international humanitarian law. We are concerned about the human lives involved — Iraqi and others. We are also concerned about refugee flows. The international community should ensure that the sovereignty and integrity of Iraq are fully preserved, as should be its secular traditions. Sectarian and ethnic conflict should not be allowed to divide the country. The right of the people of Iraq to determine their political future and to exercise control over their natural resources should also be fully respected.

The Secretary-General has already drawn attention to the increasingly difficult plight of the 1.7 million residents of the city of Basra. We wish to support any effort designed to provide relief to the civilian population of this city and other parts of the country in need of urgent assistance. We also support the decision of the Secretary-General to hold a meeting of United Nations relief agencies today to coordinate humanitarian relief efforts in Iraq.

We have tried to follow the deliberations of the Council on the Secretary-General's proposal to provide humanitarian assistance to Iraq by adjusting the mechanism of the oil for food programme. We believe that approved contracts for supplies to Iraq under the oil for food programme would be the logical priority for delivering immediate assistance to the Iraqi people. The international community must quickly get involved in restoring peace in Iraq and in the eventual reconstruction of the country and in alleviating the plight of its long-suffering people. We urge the Council to display the required unity and collective will to be able to assist the Iraqi people in this endeavour.

India has already announced its willingness to fully participate in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Iraq and its people, which will inevitably be required as a result of the current conflict. Our long-standing friendship with the people of Iraq would demand nothing less of us; we would be happy to discharge our duty in sharing this burden.

One can have differences over the necessity of war, but one cannot have differences about the urgent need for restoring peace. War is sometimes waged unilaterally, but peace must be built together. We call upon all members of the Security Council and, indeed, all Members of the United Nations to remain resolute in their efforts to secure a lasting peace and a stable future for the people of Iraq.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Poland.

Mr. Stańczyk (Poland): Poland fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union in the present debate. The importance of the item on today's agenda warrants, nevertheless, some additional remarks presenting our national perspective on the issue at hand.

Poland deeply regrets that Iraq has not abided by the provisions of resolution 1441 (2002) and has not voluntarily disarmed, which was a necessary precondition for a political solution to the crisis. Resolution 1441 (2002) provided Iraq with a final opportunity to fully comply with the will of the international community. It also contained a warning of grave consequences in case of non-compliance, based on Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

As we have repeatedly underscored since the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002), we had hoped until the last moment that the conflict would be solved by peaceful means and that military action would be undertaken only as a last resort.

The Government of Iraq has, however, decided to disregard the provisions of resolution 1441 (2002) in the same way as it has disregarded over the last 12 years the provisions of numerous resolutions adopted by the Security Council.

Iraq has not implemented its obligations with regard to disarmament, nor has it extended full cooperation to the inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Investigation Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency. It has failed to destroy its stocks of weapons of mass destruction, the existence of which was confirmed by the United Nations inspectors. By failing to abide by Security Council decisions, particularly those relating to weapons of mass destruction, the regime of Saddam Hussain constitutes a threat to international peace and security. Under those circumstances, the conclusion had to be reached that the peaceful means for the resolution of the Iraqi crisis have been exhausted and the use of force remained the only option. The exclusive responsibility for that state of affairs rests with the Iraqi leadership.

The intervention of the international coalition to force Iraq's implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1441 (2002), adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter, is not directed against the Iraqi people. It has been undertaken for the sake of eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, which threaten international peace and security. Failure to take action for the effective disarmament of Saddam Hussein's regime would be a serious political and military mistake. It would be tantamount to tolerating breaches of the law and persistent disregard of obligations to the United Nations. It would lead to the further undermining of the authority of the United Nations.

The paramount aim of the international coalition is the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, as well as the establishment of the rule of law in Iraq. The military operation will be terminated immediately following attainment of the set objectives. The Iraqi people will be able to benefit from the country's resources, of which they are the rightful owners. The whole nation and all constituents of Iraqi society will enjoy full rights and will be able to undertake the process of constructing a State based on the principles of self-determination and liberty, without distinction as to political or ethnic background, and thus they will be able to determine their own future. Iraq will be a full-fledged member of the international community and a factor of stability for the whole region. Realizing these objectives is the basic aim of the coalition and international organizations. Poland is ready to actively participate in this process.

For the sake of alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people, no effort should be spared to keep military operations effective and short. We attach great importance to minimizing the humanitarian effects of the military operation, including the migration of large parts of the population. The civilian population will be provided with aid and essential care. This will be the result not only of the efforts of the coalition itself, but of the whole international community. Early involvement of the United Nations in providing such assistance would contribute significantly to reducing the humanitarian impact of the present situation and, at the same time, would send a clear message that the Organization intends to become actively involved in providing necessary assistance for the reconstruction of the country. Our assistance will be the best demonstration of solidarity with Iraqi society.

The ongoing operation is a serious test for the international system of collective security. We expect that the permanent members of the Security Council will overcome existing divisions and will return to the practice of discharging their mandate in a spirit of shared responsibility. We also expect that the parties to the conflict will abide by the norms of international humanitarian law.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is the representative of Singapore.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): The first Security Council resolution calling for the disarmament of Iraq, resolution 687 (1991), was passed on 3 April 1991. The most recent Council resolution on Iraqi disarmament, resolution 1441 (2002), was adopted unanimously on 8 November 2002. Throughout this 12-year period, we hoped that Iraq would be disarmed peacefully. Sadly, this goal was not achieved.

Like most members of the United Nations community, we too hoped that war could be avoided. As the Secretary-General said on 17 March 2003,

> "War is always a catastrophe — it leads to major human tragedy. Lots of people are going to be uprooted, displaced from their homes, and nobody wanted that. And this is why we had hoped that the Iraqi leadership would have cooperated fully and would have been able to do this without resort to use of force."

We deeply regret that the Government of Iraq chose not to take the final opportunity afforded it under

resolution 1441 (2002), which was adopted unanimously, to fully comply with its disarmament obligations or face serious consequences. The people of Iraq, who have already suffered greatly from their Government's failure to comply with its disarmament obligations over the past 12 years, will suffer the most from this conflict.

Like many Members, we would have preferred that the Security Council had again explicitly authorized military action to disarm Iraq. But the onus was always on Iraq to avoid a war. Given Iraq's long history of flouting Security Council resolutions, Singapore's view was that the Council's inability to reach a new consensus could not be taken as a reason for inaction to disarm Iraq.

We cannot turn the clock back. We can only look ahead. We have to address the immediate challenges in Iraq, and we have to look for lasting solutions. We note that the members of the Security Council have struggled hard to achieve consensus on this issue. We hope that the Council will soon recover its unity on the subject, for the international community expects a great deal from it. As the Secretary-General said only a few hours ago, "the Council, which has now had Iraq on its agenda for 12 long years, must rediscover its unity of purpose".

The immediate challenge is the humanitarian challenge. Here we would like to make four points. First, the oil for food programme must be restarted as soon as possible. Sixty per cent of the Iraqi population is dependent on food rations procured under the auspices of the programme. The World Food Programme has estimated that in the first four weeks of this conflict, 2.1 million people may need emergency assistance. If the conflict becomes protracted, the number of people needing assistance will undoubtedly rise.

We therefore support the Secretary-General's proposals in his letter of 19 March 2003 to the President of the Security Council, and we hope that the Council will be able to reach agreement soon on a resolution that will allow the resumption of the oil for food programme to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, both during and after the hostilities. In that regard, we are encouraged by the reports we have heard of the progress made in this morning's informal consultations.

Secondly, regardless of the duration or outcome of the conflict, emergency relief must begin immediately, with priority given to the worst-affected areas. We are particularly concerned about reports from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that civilians in the city of Basra may be facing a humanitarian disaster. Urgent measures must be taken to restore basic utilities to the population there as soon as possible. We hope that international humanitarian organizations, including the ICRC, will be able to deploy their staff on the ground as soon as possible.

Thirdly, we support the Secretary-General's call for both sides involved in this conflict to respect international humanitarian law. We believe that these obligations are clear. Both sides have a responsibility to ensure that they are fulfilled.

Fourthly, we are encouraged by the pledges that many countries have already made in support of an international reconstruction programme in Iraq. However, a more pressing concern is the provision of funding for humanitarian relief operations. As the Secretary-General noted in his statement to the Security Council last week, the United Nations appeal for funds currently faces a severe shortfall of nearly $90 million.

Singapore is prepared to do its part, within our limited means, to contribute to any such international humanitarian relief effort. In response to an appeal by the Singapore Red Cross Society for contributions to a fund to help refugees and victims of the war in Iraq, the Government of Singapore has contributed almost half a million Singapore dollars to provide a quick start for the fund. We have also appealed to our citizens to contribute to it.

Finally, we hope that, as soon as the war is over, the international community will come together again to relieve the suffering of the Iraqi people, to rehabilitate their society, to reconstruct their infrastructure and to pave the way for Iraq's reintegration into the global community. The Security Council faces severe challenges in the coming months. We are confident that it will rise to those challenges.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): It is now time for the members of the Security Council to get beyond the acrimony, narrow political ambitions and separate

agendas that have hamstrung the Council in recent months and to seize this opportunity to shoulder their responsibilities. It is time that the members of the Council look to the future for Iraq and the Iraqi people. It is time that the members of the Council focus on what is at stake and provide the guidance that the international community is waiting for on humanitarian needs, long-term reconstruction and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

The Security Council's inability to agree on how to deal with the threat posed by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction was a great disappointment to Australia and to many other nations — to nations that depend on this body to help maintain international peace and security. Let us be clear. The Council failed the international community; it failed to enforce its own resolutions. The question for Council members today is whether they will allow that situation to gather momentum — to become a trend towards impotence — or whether they can stop the Council from sliding towards irrelevance and can help Iraq get back on its feet after decades of abusive leadership. If Council members do not rise to that challenge, the Council will simply be bypassed by nations that believe the Iraqi people are deserving of their assistance. It is worth observing that the situation in which the Council finds itself is one of its own making, and only its members can set it back on track.

Australia is a part of the coalition to disarm Iraq because we believe an Iraq with weapons of mass destruction represents a grave threat to our security and to international security. Australia hopes that Iraq can be disarmed soon with a minimum of harm to civilians and to coalition forces. Our participation in the coalition is in complete accordance with international law. Existing Security Council resolutions — including resolutions 678 (1990), 687 (1991) and 1441 (2002) — provide authority for the use of force to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and to restore international peace and security to the region.

We are matching our words with actions. We have provided an initial contribution of $17.5 million to United Nations humanitarian agencies, to the International Committee of the Red Cross and to other non-governmental organizations. We have two ships with 100,000 tons of Australian wheat food aid waiting offshore to start deliveries. And Australian navy divers have been helping to clear the port of Umm Qasr of mines, which will allow the safe delivery of humanitarian supplies and equipment.

We will not stop at that. We are already positioned to play our part in longer-term reconstruction work to help Iraq return to its rightful place in the international community. But it is our strong preference that the Security Council play its part. In this, Australia asks the Council to recall the vital and constructive role that the United Nations played in assisting East Timor during its historical transition to independence.

Members of this body have the responsibility to ensure that the greatest possible flexibility is provided to United Nations agencies in Iraq in order to allow them to get their job done. We urge Council members to agree on tools that will allow rapid and effective delivery of immediate humanitarian assistance to Iraq and that will assist in longer-term rehabilitation and reconstruction. That applies most immediately to resolutions on restoring the oil for food programme and on longer-term reconstruction issues.

We urge Council members to avoid indulgence in narrow, overly legalistic approaches that would tie the hands of the international community with regard to helping Iraq. The Council will bear responsibility for the humanitarian consequences if it fails to swiftly ensure passage of a transitional oil for food resolution.

And we urge Council members to face up to the facts: Iraq is now being disarmed militarily in part because the Council was unable to deal effectively with Iraq. It need not have been this way. If the Council had spoken with one voice — if it had made it clear that Saddam Hussain's cat-and-mouse games would no longer be tolerated — then Saddam just might have recognized that he had no choice but to disarm peacefully. This disunity must not continue. If members allow narrow self-interest to prevent the Council from setting in place useful and effective mechanisms for Iraq's recovery, they will bear a heavy responsibility for consigning the Council — and with it the wider United Nations role — to a marginal place in contemporary history.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Mota Sardenberg (Brazil): I would like to thank the Non-Aligned Movement for its most appropriate initiative of requesting this open meeting. I also wish to express the Brazilian Government's appreciation for the work carried out by the inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and

Inspection Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency under the careful and resolute guidance of Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei.

Scarcely two weeks ago, we expressed to the Council Brazil's commitment to a peaceful solution to the Iraqi crisis. President Lula da Silva took it upon himself to contact several heads of State and Government involved in the negotiations and addressed a letter to Secretary-General Kofi Annan with a view to promoting a peaceful solution. At the same time, Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim was in touch with many of his colleagues. Unfortunately, those and other initiatives aimed at a peaceful solution did not come to fruition.

At this juncture, Brazil can only profoundly deplore the initiation of military action and, in particular, the fact that force has been used without the express authorization of the Security Council. The Brazilian Government calls for a cessation of hostilities, for restoration of peace and for respect for Iraqi territorial integrity and sovereignty.

As in any armed conflict, this war will inevitably bring great suffering and desolation to innocent people and will result in an unavoidable toll on human life. In that regard, the Brazilian Government stresses the need for strict observance of all principles of international humanitarian law, in particular those referring to the protection of civilian populations and refugees and to the treatment of prisoners of war.

The present question has acquired a dimension that goes beyond the conflict itself and could have adverse and long-standing effects on the work of the United Nations. The Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and it is the only source of legitimacy with regard to the use of force. Peace and security are essential in order to foster economic development and social justice, and the Security Council must be at the centre of that challenge.

In that regard, Brazil reaffirms that the Security Council must be both preserved and strengthened, through conformity with and full enforcement of the resolutions that the Council itself has adopted. It must be preserved and strengthened through the enhancement of its methods of work and through reform that results in a Council that better reflects new global realities, the increased membership of the Organization and the enhanced role of developing countries in world affairs. The immediate question before the Council is how to extend to the Iraqi people the humanitarian assistance so urgently needed. As has been amply reported and reiterated, even before the military intervention, more than 60 per cent of the Iraqi population was dependent on the oil for food programme for basic provisions. Since the initiation of this conflict the situation has certainly deteriorated, and suspension of the programme has made the situation even more dramatic.

Military action without the express authorization of the Council has profound, sensitive, legal and political implications, which must be carefully weighed as the Council works towards the reestablishment of urgent forms of humanitarian assistance by the United Nations.

We are of the view that the humanitarian relief work of United Nations agencies should be promptly resumed and that the coordination of all humanitarian efforts should remain the Secretary-General's responsibility. This is a question that demands an urgent solution.

The Government of Brazil extends its full support to the Secretary-General's efforts to address the situation in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international humanitarian law.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): It is with a profound sense of sadness that the Turkish people receive the news of the ongoing war in Iraq. We pray for an early end and we continue to hope that the loss of life will be minimal. Now, on the carcass of aborted diplomacy, every passing hour describes one truth: that the international community has reason to deeply regret the division which reigned over this Council at that critical moment in history. We are left with a call to parties to uphold the principles of international humanitarian law. We appeal to them to act in accordance with the established practices thereof.

The European Union statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Greece embodies the principles and outlook that would serve us well at this time of profound change and uncertainty. It is with this understanding that Turkey has aligned itself with the position of the European Union.

Turkey sincerely values its intense and multifaceted historical and cultural ties with Iraq and its people. At times like these, time-honoured friends are called upon, first and foremost, to be candid, straightforward and truthful. It is with such feelings that Turkey addresses the Council. Had Iraq cooperated in 1991, this vicious downward spiral would have been avoided and none of its abysmal results would have been set in motion.

Today, the true friends of the Iraqi people say that there is much to regret and much to ponder upon while feeling a sense of loss and dismay.

While this outright conflict is under way, the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people is of paramount importance. The oil for food programme, the backbone of United Nations humanitarian assistance to Iraq, should continue uninterrupted. The United Nations and its specialized agencies should be able to fulfil their responsibilities in this regard. Turkey supports the suggestions of the Secretariat for ensuring the smooth functioning of the said programme during and in the aftermath of the present conflict. We think there is every reason, at this time, to follow a pragmatic and flexible approach.

In view of the vast amount of sheer disinformation with regard to Turkey in the context of northern Iraq, I take this opportunity to clarify once more Turkey's concerns and priorities in this matter.

Turkey upholds the territorial integrity, political sovereignty and national unity of Iraq. We will support the decisions reached by the Iraqi people through democratic processes. We wish to see a fully representative system in place in Iraq. Turkey actively supports efforts towards that end, as attested by the recent agreements reached in Ankara.

We believe that the natural resources of Iraq belong to all Iraqis. No desire, not even a sliver of scheming outside these basic parameters, can be ascribed to Turkey. Amateur strategists are having a field day and many do not always speak with good sense and objectivity. Nowhere are they more irresponsible than when they describe the relationship between Turks and Kurds.

Notwithstanding the transparency of our policies and our many declarations on the subject, the people of Turkey are profoundly hurt by the cynical, self-righteous, and at times insulting rhetoric emanating from certain quarters. We are at a loss to understand why such attitudes persist in spite of our repeated attempts at clarification.

We cannot allow another influx of refugees into Turkey to take place, as it did in 1991. We are not convinced by the reasoning offered to explain why such an influx would not happen this time. If it comes to that, any refugee movement should be contained inside Iraq and the people in distress provided with shelter, food and security.

We cannot allow the Kurdish armed terrorists marauding in parts of northern Iraq to abuse conditions of stability and to instigate terrorism and provocation that would set in motion a vicious circle hampering our efforts.

Briefly, we wish to see lasting conditions of stability conducive to widespread and general human and economic development established in Iraq. We do not wish to see instability emerge, sabotaging the efforts to ensure an enlightened way of life, as we and our allies have been working so hard to bring about.

It is common knowledge that elements of the Turkish armed forces are stationed in northern Iraq. They were not sent there yesterday but years before in the context of "Operation Northern Watch", which Turkey allowed to be conducted from its territory in the aftermath of the Gulf war in 1991, and, thanks to which, the Kurds living in northern Iraq received protection and humanitarian relief. We will continue to handle such delicate issues in a manner aimed at dispelling any misunderstandings that might arise under the prevailing conditions in the region.

We have no intention of entering into Iraq. Should that need occur, we will not enter Iraq to fight but to monitor a refugee crisis that might unfold, and to respond to our immediate concerns of security in the vicinity of our borders.

We do not have a concealed agenda. We are enemies of no one and we will not be an enemy for anyone. Turkey is a bastion of stability for those who seek enlightened ends. Those who can resist the detractors of Turkey and can be guided by wisdom will see that they can always find in Turkey a true friend.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): My country notes with profound disappointment that, despite the efforts to disarm Iraq within the framework of United Nations Security Council resolutions 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002), a military intervention has been launched against Iraq without the explicit authorization of the United Nations Security Council. The withdrawal of the weapons inspectors and United Nations personnel working in connection with the oil for food programme in Iraq has left a gaping hole and provoked numerous expressions of concern which Switzerland wishes to echo here today.

Putting aside differences of views concerning the conditions under which the operation of the coalition forces was launched, the emergency situation that is currently prevailing in Iraq now demands a responsible and united effort on the part of the international community to restore peace, meet humanitarian challenges and assure the well-being and future of the Iraqi people, as well as the reconstruction of their country.

As a High Contracting Party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and in light of its humanitarian tradition, Switzerland reminds the parties to the conflict of the empirical necessity to respect and insure respect for obligations set forth in those instruments. Although neither Iraq nor the United States are parties to the Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, many obligations contained in the first Additional Protocol reflect customary law and apply on that basis.

The main distinction between civilians and combatants and the principle of proportionality are especially important. It is prohibited to use civilians as human shields. Prisoners-of-war must be treated humanely at all times and must be protected in particular against all acts of violence or intimidation, as well as against insults and public curiosity. Switzerland emphasizes that international humanitarian law sets limits to the methods and means of conducting hostilities and that the use of arms that cause excessive injury is prohibited. Moreover, it urges the parties to the conflict to abstain from any use of weapons of mass destruction.

Switzerland strongly supports the appeal of the United Nations Secretary-General to the parties to the conflict to do everything within their power to allow United Nations humanitarian personnel to return to the regions affected by the conflict. This demand is an essential condition for ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid and the protection of vulnerable people. In the immediate future, it is incumbent on the States directly active in the war effort to take responsibility for the urgent needs of the civilian population.

Switzerland underlines the importance of a clear separation between military and humanitarian activities. It is imperative that the latter be guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality. Switzerland also stresses that efficient coordination must be ensured between the coalition forces and humanitarian organizations.

Switzerland appeals to the parties to the conflict to ensure access by the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) to people in need of protection and aid. The impartial and neutral activities of the ICRC must be facilitated.

Furthermore, my country demonstrated its commitment and its concerns with regard to the humanitarian consequences of this conflict even before hostilities broke out by organizing a humanitarian meeting on Iraq in Geneva on 15 and 16 February this year. Given the events on the ground, Switzerland has taken the initiative to convene on 2 April in Geneva the first meeting of the Humanitarian Issues Group Iraq.

The Swiss authorities are concerned about the direct consequences of the conflict on supplies to civilians and encourage the Security Council to continue today's efforts to reactivate the oil for food programme without delay in a form that takes due account of the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people.

The United Nations must assume its indispensable role in reaching a settlement — without delay — to the Iraq crisis, one that is acceptable to the whole international community. The United Nations must not be used as a tool or marginalized in this task. It must resume its central role at the earliest opportunity. The United Nations has an essential mission to fulfil, in particular in the coordination of humanitarian aid and in the restoration of the full sovereignty of Iraq. Such sovereignty must be re-established both at the political level, according full respect to the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, and at the economic level, acknowledging that the resources of the country are the property of the people of Iraq and theirs alone.

Hence, Switzerland solemnly appeals to the members of the Security Council to overcome their differences and together to reassume their principal responsibility, which is to maintain international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Sudan.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I want to greet you and your brotherly country as you preside over the Council at this dangerous juncture. We fully trust that, with your wisdom and ability, you will lead our ship through the storm to safe port.

We also wish to pay tribute to the Council members who refused to go along with the logic of war and who resisted every attempt to render war legitimate. Those commendable efforts did not, of course, prevent the outbreak of war, but they will remain in the annals of history as proof of the primacy of principle and the fact that the force of logic holds sway over the logic of force.

My delegation reaffirms the resolution of the League of Arab States adopted at its foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo recently. The resolution unambiguously condemned the Anglo-American aggression against Iraq and called it a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and of the principles of international law. We would like to reaffirm this resolution of the League of Arab States. It demands that the foreign forces of invasion be withdrawn immediately and unconditionally. It also demands that the aggressors bear material, legal and moral responsibility for the aggression. We reaffirm this resolution, because we believe that all the arguments adduced in support of using force are vain and invalid. We have always advocated wisdom here and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We are aware of the evils and shortcomings of the other option, and we see now that everything supports what we said.

It now appears that the war will go on, that it will take a long time, as admitted by those who are waging it. And now it seems as if the suffering of innocent civilians — men, women, children and the elderly — is going to be even worse. I would like to refer to this morning's bombing of civilians at dawn in Baghdad where many innocent people were killed.

We expect that the Council will soon take the necessary measures to restore international peace and security in Iraq. We also expect the Council to fully shoulder the burden of responsibility to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, as provided for in the United Nations Charter.

We repeat our appeal for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Iraq, to prepare for a more active part to be played by the Security Council, and for the inspectors to return, resume and conclude their task.

We call upon the international community to rise above present differences, as the possibility of a dreadful humanitarian tragedy looms before us. This has been proven in the reports of the World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The tremendous world solidarity manifested in all the mass demonstrations against the war that have taken place and continue to be held in the world's largest cities, and the sincere appeals of the religious leaders of every faith and creed, should lead to an international consensus based on respect for the Charter. This document, the Charter, which we have all agreed to uphold as our supreme guide, must not be allowed to become merely a small blue booklet that is selectively invoked or ignored as seen fit.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam): Murphy's Law applies to this particular case. What the whole international community has breathlessly feared has happened. The war against Iraq has entered its seventh day. It is deeply deplorable that the worldwide protests and tireless efforts by many Member States and members of the Security Council have failed to bring about a solution that could have helped to avoid the tragedy.

It is sad to learn of human casualties and destruction under the winds of war. The Vietnamese have an old saying: "Tears always flow downward", to describe the pains and the agony of parents who lose their children. We therefore fully understand the agony and pain of the parents on both sides of the war who have lost their sons and daughters and their nightmares, which last as long as the war endures. It is even sadder to look at the wounded Iraqi children lying in hospitals, who never expected to end up there after so much

suffering during 12 years of sanctions. I believe that they would ask, why they, of all the people, always fall victim to the mistakes of grown-ups.

The use of force against an independent, sovereign State and Member of the United Nations constitutes a gross violation of the Charter and the fundamental principles of international law. It also renders the United Nations ineffective and sets an extremely dangerous precedent in international relations. We believe that the unilateral and pre-emptive military actions against Iraq will not help to resolve the world's complex problems or ensure its security. It increases the risk of further spreading misunderstanding, radicalism and spiralling violence in the Middle East. The outbreak of sheer force of arms in this already volatile region can only exacerbate the tensions and fractures that fuel terrorism. Viet Nam is opposed to the war against Iraq, as the statement by the spokespersons of the Foreign Ministry and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam made crystal clear on 20 March 2003.

War is always a death sentence for peace. We join our voice with others who call for an immediate end to the military actions against Iraq. This fait accompli demands a swift response from the international community in the field of humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people. As the supplies of essential necessities, on which 60 per cent of the Iraqi population depend, are reported to be running very low, the oil for food programme should be resumed swiftly. It is imperative for the United Nations to shoulder the responsibilities of coordinating the international efforts to help the Iraqi people to overcome the dire consequences of war and rebuild their country. The people and Government of Viet Nam are ready to take an active part in that collective endeavour.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Jamaica.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): I wish to thank the members of the Security Council for convening this open debate at the request of the Permanent Representative of Malaysia, acting on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. This is a critical time for the world community. We are involved with the question of war and peace, an issue that can affect the survival of all of us. The Security Council has the onerous responsibility, under Article 24 of the Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security on behalf of the international community. It is a responsibility from which it must not resile and its task is to find answers, however difficult or complex the problem may be.

It is a matter of profound regret for Jamaica that military action against Iraq was initiated by a trans-Atlantic coalition on Wednesday of last week. Jamaica has emphasized all along the importance of Iraq's fulfilling its obligations. Indeed, Jamaica will always insist that every Member State, not only Iraq, must comply with resolutions of the Security Council. Nor will Jamaica ever condone the so-called right of any country to develop weapons of mass destruction, engage in acts of repression against its citizens or support terrorism.

But we have expressed our view, and we hold to it, that there was a viable alternative to war — the way of peaceful disarmament through an inspections process that had not been exhausted. Regrettably, there was resort to the use of force and what we are seeing now are the harsh realities, death and destruction caused by military conflict. We have seen in vivid detail a powerful demonstration of sophisticated technology and the destructive power of modern weaponry. The aerial bombardment of Baghdad, the wailing sirens and the thunder of explosions have no doubt succeeded in producing fear and trepidation especially among civilians in Baghdad. We fear that this may be just the beginning. The scars of war run deep and generations of Iraqis will bear them, as will generations of Americans and other citizens of the international community. We deeply fear the prospect of a humanitarian disaster from a siege of Baghdad and other Iraqi cities and from the consequences of continued fighting.

In the circumstances, as the Secretary-General has emphasized, a heavy responsibility for the protection of the civilians lies in the hands of the belligerents and occupying Powers to ensure that loss of life and suffering among the civilian population is kept at a minimum. In this process, the role of the United Nations is twofold. First, it must insist that humanitarian aid is provided for the Iraqi victims of this war. Secondly, it must exert its influence to bring about a ceasefire to end what could become the massacre of innocent Iraqis.

Jamaica believes that it is never too late for peace. We therefore urge the Security Council to

remain engaged and to take bold steps to achieve a cessation of hostilities and to spare the peoples of the world the horrors of continued war.

The nations that have undertaken military action in Iraq are countries with which we are bound by ties of history and shared values of freedom. That very friendship, which we highly value, obliges us to make heard today our small voice for peace. This is a time for a sincere, bold and unequivocal search for peace to save the lives of combatants and the innocent, to stop the possible spread of war and to secure mankind's future in this troubled world. Our position is rooted in a deep commitment to the cause of peace, and comes with a heavy sense of sadness about the outbreak and consequences of war. It also comes from a concern about the implications for the future of the multilateral system and for the realization of ideals of collective security under the Charter, the rule of law and our collective search to achieve a higher destiny for mankind.

Beyond what is happening in Iraq today, and transcending the specific circumstances, there is a challenge for all of us. It is a challenge to ensure that the collective wisdom of the United Nations, and of the Security Council in particular, not be eroded by the will of the mighty. The Security Council must remain the source of legitimacy for any collective action, and it should not be compromised or undermined by any new doctrines or policies inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations.

At this critical juncture, we urge the Security Council to remain active and to continue to seek ways and means to restore peace and address the humanitarian emergency in Iraq, based on unity of purpose and in accordance with the high ideals and principles of the Charter. That must always be our guide.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on whom I now call.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): My Government deplores that diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving and implementing Security Council resolutions on the disarmament of Iraq were prematurely and arbitrarily aborted, and that a sovereign member of this Organization has become subject to an outright invasion. We believe that there was no justification for departing from the diplomatic path; neither is there anything that could possibly justify the invasion of Iraq.

The unilateral war against Iraq does not meet any standard of international legitimacy. It is not waged in self-defence against any prior armed attack. Nor, even by any stretch of imagination, could Iraq, after 12 years of comprehensive sanctions, be considered an imminent threat against the national security of the belligerent Powers.

It is also evident that the war was in no way authorized by the Security Council. Quite to the contrary, the latest round of diplomacy in the Council clearly demonstrated that the clear majority of the members, including the majority of the permanent five, were either steadfastly against or clearly unwilling to support the draft resolution that would have authorized war.

By the same token, the implementation of Security Council resolutions cannot be advanced as a justification to resort to war. It is true that 12 years have elapsed since the Security Council set out the obligations of the Iraqi Government with respect to disarmament. And it is equally true that Iraqi officials had yet to clarify a number of relevant outstanding issues. But it was for the Council to make that determination and decide on the proper course of action. In fact, the Council and the international community, on whose behalf it operates, implicitly or explicitly objected to mandating any Power to selectively enforce Security Council resolutions. Nor can it be argued that the United States and its allies drew legitimacy from the fact that they were the victims of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. If any thing, the United States was a major culprit behind Iraq's acquisition and unhindered use of these weapons in the 1980s.

That is why this war has received almost universal condemnation. Moreover, the stated goal of regime change in Iraq runs flagrantly counter to the norms and principles of international law; and so does the concept of arbitrary pre-emptive strike, which openly negates the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. Democracy is not something that can be taken to societies by tanks and helicopter gunships. The Iraqi people may resent their Government but, as they have shown in the past several days, they do not accept their liberation through foreign occupation. The world, the people in our region and the Iraqis have not

forgotten that those who now want to impose democracy on Iraq at gunpoint have had a well-known record of supporting and sustaining dictatorship there and elsewhere.

The blind support provided to Israel — which has not only flouted the decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly for decades but, in fact, has a record of repression and murder that is second to none — is yet another instructive case of the seriousness of claims calling for the enforcement of Council resolutions, liberation and democracy.

The grave consequences of this war on regional and global stability have already been underlined by various speakers and by my delegation on previous occasions. In addition, my country, which shares long borders with Iraq and is dangerously close to the theatre of hostilities, has not only received refugees but in fact rockets and missiles from both sides of the hostilities, some of which have landed in population centres. I must register here my Government's strongest protests and underline the imperative of taking remedial and preventive measures by the belligerents.

United Nations Member States have frequently warned that the undermining of international law will sooner or later come back to haunt the very authors of such practices. The parading of prisoners of war before television cameras is in fact in contravention of the relevant Geneva Convention. Iraq and the United States have both violated the Convention, and should stop their violations. This instance clearly shows that all countries, be they big or small, benefit from the principles of international law. Undoubtedly, the provisions of international law should be promoted and enforced in their entirety. Selectivity is not only unacceptable, but is in fact dangerously impractical.

My Government is concerned over the extensive aerial bombardment and artillery shelling that is resulting in the death and suffering of Iraqi civilians and in the deteriorating situation in Iraqi population centres. All indications suggest that a humanitarian crisis looms ahead. The humanitarian situation in Basra, which is indicative of what may soon happen throughout Iraq, is an especially grave cause for concern. My Government has made preparations to assist Iraqi civilians, in cooperation with multilateral institutions. However, under the Fourth Geneva Convention, it is clear that the countries that have resorted to war have to shoulder the full burden of meeting the humanitarian and protection requirements of Iraqi civilians, and must be accountable for the welfare and the safety of the people.

At the same time, it is imperative that the future well-being and the immediate humanitarian requirements of the Iraqi people not be decided unilaterally outside the framework of the United Nations. We concur with the Secretary-General that the guiding principles in the work of the Council and the Organization on this issue should be respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, national unity and political independence of Iraq, as well as the inalienable right of the Iraqi people to self-determination and to sovereignty over their natural resources.

While we need to tackle the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Iraq, it is not acceptable that the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should fail to consider the conflict itself, which is the cause of the humanitarian and political catastrophe that is unfolding in our neighbourhood. Thus, the Council has an obligation to address forthwith the breach of peace that is unfolding in Iraq. The international community expects this Council to live up to its obligations and call for an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Sun Joun-yung (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea deeply regrets that Iraq's non-compliance with its disarmament obligations has led to the current situation.

Over the past 12 years, Iraq has repeatedly refused to comply with its disarmament obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions. Iraq's record of compliance with its obligations has been dismal. The initial deadline for Iraq's disarmament was flatly ignored and the subsequent resolutions, as many as 17 over the 12 years, have all been met with Iraq's persistent refusal to comply.

We believe that Iraq has been given more than enough time and opportunities to disarm. Since Iraq has failed to comply with its disarmament obligations for the past 12 years, we cannot but conclude that Iraq has had no genuine intention to disarm. If Iraq today

faces the serious consequences of which it was warned in resolution 1441 (2002), it has no one but itself to blame for failing to take advantage of the time and opportunities provided.

Under these circumstances, the coalition action by the international community should be construed as last-resort, but inevitable measures taken after the exhaustion of all possible diplomatic efforts to resolve the issue peacefully.

With the hostilities now unfolding, we are deeply concerned over the plight of the innocent Iraqi people who may suffer directly from the deteriorating humanitarian situation. Given the magnitude of the conflict, it is urgent for the international community to take necessary measures to meet the acute humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, expeditiously providing key humanitarian supplies, in particular food and medicines.

The Republic of Korea fully supports the Secretary-General's efforts to facilitate humanitarian assistance and relief for Iraq through the necessary adjustments to the oil for food programme, as envisaged in his recent letter to the President of the Security Council. For its part, the Republic of Korea will provide humanitarian and other assistance, including refugee relief, to Iraq, as well as economic support for Iraq's neighbouring countries.

We sincerely hope that the ongoing hostilities will come to the earliest possible conclusion with minimum casualties, particularly among the civilian population, and that peace and stability can be restored to the region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Diab (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank you, Sir, for convening this emergency meeting.

On Monday, 24 March 2003, the Foreign Ministers of the League of Arab States adopted a resolution condemning the Anglo-American military action against Iraq, deeming it to be an act of aggression, a violation of the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law, a breach with international legitimacy, a threat to international peace and security and a defiance of the international community and world public opinion.

The unilateral military action undertaken by the United States and the United Kingdom lacks any moral and legal foundation. This has been reflected in the views of the majority of the members of the Security Council, of popular international and regional positions, and of Christian and Islamic organizations around the world, all of which oppose this military action and call for its end and for the immediate withdrawal of the invading forces from the territory of Iraq.

At the Security Council's meeting on 19 March, the overwhelming majority of Council members expressed the opinion, first, that, on the basis of assertions made by representatives of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the means for the peaceful disarmament of Iraq had not yet been exhausted. Regrettably, those agencies were withdrawn from Iraq without being given sufficient time to discharge their mandates. Secondly, the Security Council also considered that resolution 1441 (2002), adopted unanimously, does not permit automatic resort to force. Moreover, the pretext of political regime change in Iraq to justify this military action is a violation not only of that country's territorial integrity and sovereignty, but also of the basic principles of the United Nations Charter, especially Article 2, paragraph 4, which prohibits States from "the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State".

It is worth recalling here the denunciation — made by the heads of Arab States in the 1 March resolution adopted at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit — of attempts to impose changes on the region or to intervene in its internal affairs. The Arab heads of State considered that the affairs of the Arab nation and the development of its systems of governance shall be decided by the people of the region in accordance with their national and pan-Arab interests, free from any foreign intervention.

The invocation of the right to self-defence is an invalid argument, since Article 51 of the Charter recognizes the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence only if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations — a condition that is not met in this case. We must recall Iraq's affirmation at the Beirut summit last year of its commitment to respect the independence, sovereignty, territorial

integrity and security of Kuwait in order to guarantee against any repetition of the events of 1990. We should also note Iraq's effective cooperation with IAEA, which declared it free of nuclear programmes and weapons, and with UNMOVIC, which asserted that, after four months of inspections, it had found no weapon of mass destruction or prohibited programmes in Iraq.

The unilateral military action undertaken by the United States of America and the United Kingdom is beginning to unleash environmental, economic and humanitarian catastrophes in Iraq that threaten the entire Middle East. Moreover, the instability resulting from this military action has become a danger to the system of international peace and security.

For all those reasons, the Security Council is called upon today to do its utmost to control the current crisis in Iraq and to ensure the return to a peaceful approach to the verification of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction on the basis of relevant Council resolutions. The Council must also take the necessary measures to put an end to the current military action and to bring about the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of American and British forces from Iraqi territory so as to preserve the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and to restore the Council's authority in decisions on questions of international peace and security in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, to which the international community is fully attached.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Hachami (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Mr. President, our profound thanks for your prompt response to the request of the League of Arab States and the Non-Aligned Movement to hold an urgent meeting of the Security Council on the grave and serious developments that the brotherly country of Iraq has witnessed since the outbreak of the conflict.

This war has erupted despite the multiple international appeals regarding the importance of finding a peaceful settlement to the question of Iraq that could be accepted by all parties and that would reflect the aspirations of all Member States of the United Nations. Through many international and Arab efforts, Tunisia has sought to contain the crisis and to find a settlement within the framework of international legitimacy and the United Nations in a way that ensures the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq and spares the Middle East more tension and instability.

Since war is now a fait accompli, His Excellency Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia, has expressed his deep regret and concern over the grave and adverse impact that this conflict will have on the brotherly people of Iraq and on the Middle East as a whole, because the conflict will increase the perils and risk of instability. It comes at a time when all the people of the region are in dire need of security and peace so that they can devote their energies to reconstruction, development and the establishment of good, cordial relations with one another.

Tunisia calls on all international parties to work to contain the present conflict, to overcome its adverse impact and repercussions and to return to a peaceful approach to dealing with the issues pending. That way, the people of Iraq and the region will be spared further catastrophes, particularly in the light of the continuing deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories as a result of the Israeli attacks on the Palestinian people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Listre (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful to the League of Arab States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries for requesting this open debate at a moment of such importance and seriousness, and to you, Mr. President, for convening the meeting without delay.

The position of my country has been clearly stated in three previous debates. Argentina deeply regrets that after 12 years it was not possible to achieve the disarmament of Iraq by peaceful means and that the Government of Iraq did not extend its full, immediate and unconditional cooperation, as required by resolution 1441 (2002), which was adopted unanimously by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter on 8 November 2002. Argentina also deeply regrets that a divided Security Council was not able to find within the provisions of the Charter and its own resolutions a peaceful solution to the crisis. It regrets even more the armed conflict and the humanitarian catastrophe looming over Iraq.

We have always said that the use of force is the last resort, once all peaceful means have been exhausted, and that within the United Nations system it must be authorized by the Security Council. Nevertheless, we believe that given the present situation, legal and political debate on the legality of the armed conflict will once again divide and paralyse the Council and divert it from what we understand should be the priority of the moment: the humanitarian situation of the Iraqi people. With millions of potential victims of catastrophe because of a lack of essential elements, we believe that it would constitute a lack of sensitivity and a failure of the multilateral system if the Council were to look only to the past and failed to assume its important responsibilities in the present.

The actions of the United Nations and, in particular, of the Security Council must be directed at enabling humanitarian organizations to provide medicines, food and whatever else becomes necessary and, if need be, to facilitate the opening of humanitarian corridors. We urge all parties to cooperate in this objective and, as far as possible, to prevent military actions from impacting on the civilian population and on civilian facilities. This position does not in any way prejudge the legality or legitimacy of the armed conflict. It is aimed only at giving the necessary protection to the civilian population in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. In that context, Argentina especially appreciates the work carried out with great dedication by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent.

This is why, in these tragic circumstances, we support the initiatives of the Secretary-General to adapt the oil for food programme to the present exceptional circumstances. This does not imply a value judgement of the facts that make such changes to the programme necessary. It neither legitimizes nor condemns the use of force. We believe that the Security Council must give the Secretary-General the necessary authority and flexibility in this context to act to mitigate the needs of the Iraqi people.

As was very appropriately expressed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Argentine Republic, Mr. Carlos Ruckauf, to the Secretary-General, and as stated in the letter I myself sent to the President of the Security Council on 20 March 2003, Argentina reiterates its willingness to participate in humanitarian tasks to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people.

In the eyes of world public opinion, the Security Council was not able to prevent the armed conflict. We cannot allow the Council now to be perceived as the obstacle to humanitarian assistance. If, in the face of the daily tragedy of millions of innocent Iraqis, the Council is paralysed or fails to act with the determination required by the circumstances, that public opinion might perhaps wonder what use the Security Council is and what use the United Nations is. That would surely be another heavy blow to this already weakened Organization in the eyes of world public opinion. Because Argentina believes that, despite its weaknesses and shortcomings, the United Nations is, and can be to an even greater extent, an appropriate instrument for international peace and security, economic and social development and the protection of human rights, we urge the Council to rise to the level of the responsibilities entrusted to it by Member States and contribute to strengthening this common enterprise.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Mauritius.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): We would, first of all, like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement this morning, and I would like to say that we agree with his statement.

In the statement that I made during the public meeting of 19 February 2003, I pointed out that resolution 1441 (2002), adopted unanimously by the Security Council, reflected the will of the international community to see Iraq rid itself of its weapons of mass destruction. At that time, a last chance was offered to Iraq to opt for full compliance with resolution 1441 (2002). Iraq's full cooperation was an essential element in resolving the crisis. Had Iraq respected all its obligations, as mandated by Security Council resolutions, more particularly resolution 1441 (2002), we would not have reached this situation and war would have been avoided.

At the same time, it is recognized that Iraq had made progress recently in its cooperation with the United Nations inspectors, albeit under pressure. That is why we have been of the view that war was avoidable and more time should have been allowed to the United Nations inspectors to complete their work.

Mauritius has also been of the view that any military action against Iraq needed the sanction of the Security Council. During the deliberations that took

place in the Security Council these past weeks, Mauritius and many other countries of the region were hopeful that the Security Council would remain united on this issue. Regrettably, this has not been the case, and we all know the sequence of events that followed, thereby showing the inability of the Security Council to avoid war.

War is always a catastrophe and leads to human suffering. As the Secretary-General himself has pointed out, the current situation is a sad moment for all the Members of the United Nations.

In the face of this human tragedy, it is our hope that the conflict should end as soon as possible, with minimum casualties, especially at the level of civilians. Mauritius calls for immediate action to be taken to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi civilian population. Furthermore, we believe that all prisoners of war on all sides should be treated humanely, in accordance with the Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war.

Mauritius appeals to the Security Council to fully assume its responsibility and to do its utmost to deal with the crisis in a manner that will restore its credibility and uphold its dignity.

In conclusion, we would like to say that the Government of Mauritius stands ready to participate in its very modest way to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Iraq, and in that connection, it has set up a solidarity fund for the Iraqi people, the proceeds of which will be channelled through the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Ivanou (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): We have become convinced yet again that history only teaches us that it teaches nothing.

Today we are witnessing armed aggression against a sovereign Member State of the United Nations, which had been planned well in advance and launched in circumvention of the authority of the Security Council, with which it is empowered under the Charter.

To our deepest regret, the efforts undertaken by peace-loving nations proved insufficient to avert war. The position of the international community was completely ignored, and the process to settle the Iraqi issue through political and diplomatic means under the aegis of the United Nations was disrupted.

The President of the Republic of Belarus, its Government and the entire Belarusian people condemn the aggression against Iraq. We resolutely oppose any unilateral attempts to enforce systems of administration and governance upon peoples of the world. Bombers and missiles cannot serve as means for delivery of humanitarian aid.

Belarus is very well aware of the horrible toll taken by war. During these tragic days the Iraqi people can rely on our full support.

The use of force as a last resort constitutes an exclusive prerogative of the Security Council, disregard for which leads to the undermining of the existing world order and the diminishing of the norms of international law.

The Republic of Belarus calls upon the Security Council to immediately stop the aggression and prevent further unjustified civilian casualties.

As a United Nations founding Member State, Belarus insists that an adequate assessment be made of the military action and urges our Organization to reassert at this critical moment its direct responsibility for the maintenance of peace and the rule of law.

Resolution of the Iraqi issue, in conformity with the objectives of the United Nations, can only be attained through peaceful means based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and the sovereign right of the Iraqi people to independently choose its own path of development.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Japan.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): Thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting.

Japan has consistently sought a peaceful solution to the problem of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction through international coordination and has exerted its own diplomatic efforts, including the dispatch of the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to Iraq.

Weapons of mass destruction are terrible weapons that indiscriminately kill and maim civilians in large numbers. We must seriously consider the situation in which such inhumane weapons are in the hands of a dictator who represses his own people. In today's

world, the question of whether or not one possesses weapons of mass destruction is not something that can be left unanswered.

Japan has stressed that the Security Council must act in unity and fulfil its responsibility for the peace and security of the world. It is regrettable that the Security Council ultimately could not reach a common view and thus failed to stand united.

However, we could not leave this problem unresolved forever. That is because, in the course of 12 years, Iraq has time and again violated 17 Security Council resolutions. Although the international community gave it repeated opportunities for a peaceful solution, Iraq made no effort to seize such opportunities and repeatedly violated Security Council resolutions. It also failed to take the final opportunity afforded by resolution 1441 (2002) and, to the very end, refused to respond to the earnest efforts of the international community. Although it was clear that Iraq alone held the key to peace, it closed the way to peace through its own actions. Iraq did not demonstrate that it was fundamentally changing its attitude.

In no situation is it easy to make a decision to support the use of force. It goes without saying that the best way would be for weapons of mass destruction to be dismantled without armed conflict. However, in a situation where that is impossible, Japan has come to the conclusion that, as a responsible member of the international community, it supports the actions taken by the United States and its coalition partners.

It is Japan's heartfelt hope that the combat will be concluded at the earliest possible time, with the minimum casualties, and that the threat posed by Iraq to the international community will be removed. We also find it essential that Iraq be rebuilt as soon as possible and that its people be enabled to live peacefully in a free and prosperous society. Toward that end, it is important that the international community cooperates in supporting the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq. Japan, for its part, will address that issue actively.

Japan is deeply aware that anxiety about the future of the Middle East is mounting because of the military actions being taken against Iraq. Now is the time for Japan to undertake further efforts on behalf of peace and stability in the region.

In accordance with that basic policy, Japan has decided to provide humanitarian assistance, including aid for refugees and assistance for neighbouring countries, totalling approximately $112.53 million. Specifically, it has announced assistance to be provided through international organizations, at $5.03 million; assistance through Japanese non-governmental organizations, at $3.3 million; assistance through the Japan International Cooperation Agency aimed at strengthening the emergency medical care system; and humanitarian emergency personnel and material assistance based on Japan's international peace cooperation law. Japan has also decided to extend $100 million in grant aid to Jordan and $4.2 million in food aid to Palestinian refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Moreover, Japan will strengthen its efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East and will promote measures such as dialogue and exchanges with the Islamic world.

Japan strongly hopes that the international community will focus on the tasks that lie ahead and that the United Nations, including the Security Council, will be united in its efforts to restore peace and stability in Iraq and the surrounding region. Japan, for its part, will contribute actively to ensuring that the United Nations carries out the primary functions expected of it so that solutions can be found to the various challenges facing the international community.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Kerim (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): At the outset, I should like to express our deep regret that the Security Council was not able to achieve a consensus on Iraq. The Republic of Macedonia consistently supported Council members in their search for an agreed way forward towards achieving the objective of the immediate, full and unconditional disarmament of Iraq, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1441 (2002).

Unfortunately, the Iraqi regime did not comprehend the seriousness of the situation and failed yet again to fulfil its obligations to disarm, disregarding the demands of the international community. If Iraq had made a real effort to cooperate in substance during the past 12 years — especially in the light of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002),

which provided a final opportunity for peaceful disarmament — it would have been possible to avoid the current situation. The action that is being led by the "coalition of the willing" represents the last resort, and it is in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The energy of the Security Council must now be focused on the humanitarian aspect of the Iraqi crisis. The current divisions and disagreements among Council members must be immediately resolved in order to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi population. We support the plan aimed at continuing and adapting, in a manner consistent with the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General, the oil for food programme, which must be provided with adequate authorization to ensure the rapid delivery of humanitarian assistance in Iraq. Failure to take action under these circumstances will only further exacerbate the situation on the ground.

The Secretary-General stressed the necessity of respecting the territorial integrity of Iraq and "the right of the Iraqi people to determine their own political future and control their own natural resources". We fully share his view on this issue. Iraq's territorial integrity must be fully preserved, and sovereignty should be restored as soon as possible to the people of Iraq, who alone are entitled to decide their future. The international community's help and support will be essential for Iraq in the days to come. The United Nations sanctions must be lifted as soon as possible and followed immediately by an international reconstruction programme.

In conclusion, as we have stated in the Security Council's previous open debates on this issue, we urge Council members to seek the broadest possible consensus on achieving objectives with regard to Iraq. The possibility of a huge humanitarian crisis in that country makes it even more imperative that the Council's effectiveness and unity be restored.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Giraldo (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia decided to speak in this open debate because of the obvious urgency of providing to the Iraqi people, as soon as possible, the humanitarian assistance that it requires at this difficult time.

Leaving aside considerations about what occurred in the Security Council and on the international stage during the past three weeks, the Government of Colombia believes that what is fundamental today is that we try to prevent the past from distorting our current and future obligations, which are to make less difficult the conditions in which the Iraqi people are living and, later, to work on rebuilding the nation.

In a communiqué dated 17 March, Colombia urged the United Nations to provide the Iraqi people with the humanitarian assistance required at every stage of this crisis. We also urged the international community to contribute to the objective of opening up new progress and development opportunities for the Iraqi people, in a democratic environment and with full guarantees of their fundamental rights and freedoms. That was stated by President Uribe Vélez when, in a message to the Colombian people, he said, "International action must protect civilians and respect the democratic rights of the people of Iraq".

It is essential that the Security Council and the United Nations take up the issue of Iraq to provide the assistance required by the people in terms of humanitarian aid and the rebuilding of the country. We must prevent a humanitarian catastrophe, brought about by hunger, that might arise in the coming weeks.

Colombia urges all Security Council members to put an end to the debate of the past three weeks and to concentrate on real aspects of life and sustenance for the Iraqi people, such as providing humanitarian assistance, ensuring the continuation of the oil for food programme, giving priority to such supplies and permitting the required funding for all these tasks. It is essential that the draft resolution currently being discussed in the Council provide the Secretary-General with the necessary authority and flexibility to move this work forward. It is urgent that the draft resolution be adopted as soon as possible.

Later, we will be able to — and will have to — discuss all the legal aspects of the current situation, and the arguments of Member States will surely serve to guide us in future crises and in similar situations. But today, our principal concern must be to rise to the ethical demands of our time. In the past, war theoreticians and practitioners spoke of the scorched-earth policy and its deadly consequences. Today, how things have changed. Humanitarian aid, promoted by all, is entirely the opposite, since it seeks to make

conditions less distressing and to protect lives during and after confrontations. Let us stop the verbiage and return to the human aspect. The requirements of humanitarian assistance mean we must act and we must act quickly. Let's clear the way for the United Nations to make this vital contribution.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Adamia (Georgia): Let me express deep concern over the current situation in Iraq, in particular its humanitarian implications. We are saddened that the coalition was compelled to use force as a last resort to address the Iraqi regime's non-compliance, for over 12 years, with the demands of Security Council resolutions and the resulting serious consequences, including those of a humanitarian nature. This is yet another example of the consequences that could be brought about by the practice of ignoring Security Council resolutions aimed at maintaining regional or international peace and security.

Today we are confronted with a humanitarian situation in Iraq that could escalate into a large-scale crisis. In the present circumstances, with the Security Council having tested the mechanism of oil for food to address the humanitarian issues in Iraq, the current humanitarian crisis has no justification.

Notwithstanding differences in political approaches of the Security Council members, the emerging situation in Iraq requires the Security Council to display resolve, in particular, to endorse the proposals presented by the Secretary-General and thereby relieve the suffering of millions of Iraqis.

The Security Council is well able to employ this kind of effective mechanism. In order to meet these needs, we believe that the Secretary-General should be provided with sufficient authority and flexibility to use existing resources and to assemble new resources. The Iraqi people should know that the international community is ready to take far-reaching steps in this respect.

At the same time, along with many other States, Georgia considers it vital to see the effectiveness and unity of the Security Council restored in dealing with this humanitarian issue, as well as all other outstanding issues related to conflict resolution and the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Uzbekistan notes with regret that the non-compliance of the Iraqi regime over the past 12 years with Security Council resolutions, including Council resolution 1441 (2002), has led to the current conflict. Under such circumstances, we can only cherish the hope that the conflict will end as soon as possible with minimum suffering and loss of human life. Uzbekistan strongly favours the disarmament of Iraq. Unfortunately, the latest events in Iraq have destroyed the consensus in the Security Council. From our standpoint, the disagreements which have arisen in the Security Council should not blind us to the main task, which is the need for the complete disarmament of the Iraqi regime, including the threat of chemical and biological weapons in the hands of terrorists.

The humanitarian situation in Iraq is getting worse each day. The international community should take urgent measures to improve this situation, including guaranteeing drinking water, food, electricity and basic necessities for the Iraqi population. In this context, Uzbekistan calls upon the Security Council to continue, as soon as possible, the United Nations oil for food programme in order to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq which would cause the suffering, first and foremost, of the Iraqi people. The humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people should be met as soon as possible.

In this regard, Uzbekistan fully supports the proposal of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, that he be given authorization to provide urgent humanitarian assistance, on behalf of the international community, to Iraq.

In conclusion, Uzbekistan supports the efforts directed at restoring the effectiveness and unity of the Security Council in settling the situation around Iraq, something which is extremely important for strengthening the authority and universal role and significance of the United Nations in international relations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Latvia.

Mr. Jegermanis (Latvia): Latvia has aligned itself with the statement of the European Union; however, we deem it is necessary to express our views

on this critical issue. The situation has completely changed since we last addressed this issue in the Security Council's open debate.

Twelve years of prolonged effort by the international community to disarm the regime of Saddam Hussain by peaceful means have not been successful and diplomatic resources have been exhausted. Latvia regrets that Saddam Hussain has managed to polarize the international community, making any further diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation impossible. The Iraqi regime is solely and exclusively responsible for the consequences of its actions.

On 20 March 2003, the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia took a decision on the support of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002), pledging its support and readiness to join the efforts of the international coalition aimed at the disarmament of Iraq.

Latvia believes that everything possible must be done to avoid civilian casualties in the course of military operations. Latvia will offer humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people, take part in the rebuilding of the country and work to eliminate the legacy of totalitarianism.

In order to swiftly handle the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, we support the Secretary General's proposal to exploit the oil for food programme by adjusting it to the new situation. The international community in general, and the Security Council in particular, have to act in unity at this critical moment in order to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq.

Latvia will support the involvement of the United Nations in the process of rebuilding and the establishment of a democratic Iraq that is at peace with its neighbours and not in possession of weapons of mass destruction. We are convinced that active involvement of the United Nations during and after the current crisis in Iraq will secure the authority of the United Nations in the international community.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nicaragua.

Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): During the present international crisis, the Government of Nicaragua has consistently emphasized how important it is for the multilateral system and, particularly, the United Nations Security Council, to shoulder its collective responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, which implies acting as an efficient instrument to carry out timely actions to reinforce the faith in and credibility of the United Nations system.

We are speaking today to reiterate the resolute commitment of the Government of Nicaragua to the international community. The Government of Nicaragua has unambiguously supported all the Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1441 (2002), which was designed to bring about the immediate and unconditional disarmament of Iraq. That country has not complied with that resolution, thus endangering international security.

The present situation is the outcome of Iraq's defiance of the collective will of the United Nations, in particular as expressed in resolutions 678 (1990) and 1441 (2002). Those resolutions underlie the present course of events, which was precipitated by non-compliance with them.

The time has come to revitalize and renew the united and consistent action of the Security Council. We agree with the Secretary-General when he said today that the time has come for the Council to find its singleness of purpose once again.

Nicaragua considers that our Organization should focus its efforts and action on the humanitarian situation affecting the Iraqi people, a people which for many years has been the innocent victim of an oppressive regime. We are concerned about the lack of electricity and drinking water, and particularly the situation of children at risk of illness for lack of hygiene, food and medicine. Also, internally displaced persons who lack the necessary services will depend on the concrete action taken by the Council.

For this reason, Nicaragua believes that it is extremely important for the Security Council to renew the Secretary-General's mandate and adjust the oil for food programme so that humanitarian assistance to Iraq is brought in an efficient and realistic way. The new international situation calls for an updating, a strengthening and an expansion of the spirit and scope of the oil for food programme.

The people of Nicaragua can bear witness to the importance of the United Nations as a decisive factor in the post-conflict era. Looking back on our region, the Council will recall how the United Nations role

helped Central America to come out of the deepest political and socio-economic crisis of its modern history, which required the active and intense presence of the United Nations. Ever since its creation, the participation of the United Nations in the various international conflicts through different and creative mechanisms has been essential to confront humanitarian problems and to assure international peace and security.

We want a dynamic and efficient organization that will secure its central role in the international order. For this reason, Nicaragua would like to emphasize once again the importance of having the United Nations play its historic part in the present humanitarian crisis. Its presence is indispensable in providing immediate humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people.

Nicaragua has been a victim of war and of the pain and suffering in its wake. It is very familiar with the importance of international cooperation and is prepared to provide post-conflict humanitarian assistance that might consist within a legal framework of sending experts in demining and medical assistance to victims.

I would like to conclude by quoting a notable statesman, who said:

> "Winning the war is a task for part of society, but building the peace and bringing about unity is the task of all. None are excluded, and there can be no selfishness."

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): We had hoped that disarming Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction could be done peacefully through a united approach by the Security Council. This was unfortunately not the case.

A major task before us now is to ensure the protection of the civilian population by all parties to the conflict and to alleviate suffering through effective humanitarian assistance. For the longer term, Iraq and the Middle East must be ensured a stable future, based on peace and prosperity for the peoples of the region.

As the war unfolds, the international community must be prepared to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people. Norway will shoulder its responsibility by playing an active role in easing the suffering by increasing our humanitarian assistance and participating in the reconstruction of Iraq.

We will continue our close dialogue with the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the Red Cross system. We will also support Norwegian humanitarian non-governmental organizations, already active in the region. In addition to our contributions to meet the acute humanitarian needs, we will also consider assistance towards reconstruction of infrastructure. Norway will contribute in the areas where we have capabilities and competence on the basis of assessed needs and in coordination with others.

There are considerable resources vested in the oil for food programme. Norway joins others in urging the Security Council to keep this programme running, to meet the most immediate humanitarian needs of the population. The oil for food programme should be used to alleviate the growing humanitarian crisis and for reconstruction. In this respect, we would like to appeal to the Security Council to agree quickly on the continuation of the oil for food programme, giving the Secretary-General the necessary authority and flexibility to respond to urgent humanitarian needs.

Iraq is a country rich on resources and human capital and will, no doubt, also contribute to rapid reconstruction once the present conflict is over. It is important that the overall international assistance is coordinated by the United Nations. We welcome the Secretary-General's statement outlining such a role for the United Nations.

If the Security Council is to play its role of safeguarding international peace and security, as envisaged in the United Nations Charter, it is imperative that the unity of the Council is maintained. This must be the lesson learned.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Bennouna (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I have already had an opportunity to tell you how grateful my country is to see you presiding over the Council, and I am following your instructions.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill, when London was subjected to carpet bombing, it was a time for cries and tears but not for statements and speeches. The war is raging in Iraq, cradle of urban civilization, where the

memory of humanity is captured in the first clay tablets, inscribed with the first alphabet.

War is raging in one of the most sensitive parts of the world — a region where the peace of the world is now at stake. Everybody knows that the highest of all priorities, the one that we should have looked at first, was to give justice to the Palestinians, who have waited more than 50 years for the decisions of the United Nations to be implemented, in order to restore their dignity and to give them the enjoyment of national sovereignty within their own State, with Al-Quds, Jerusalem, as its capital.

The war that is raging today is now being broadcast live and in real time and is being experienced by the entire population, wherever they may be. These populations are witnessing innocent civilians fall victim, women and children, elderly people. Entire families, like those families of Council members or my own, are watching their relatives held prisoner, intimidated, wounded or killed. War today is no longer something you find in experts' reports. It is not literature. It is not a matter of disarmament experts. It is not a matter of referring to one legal provision or another. War is the bitter reality that makes us all doubt whether we have made advances in our ethics, values and humanity.

The Kingdom of Morocco has often addressed the Council, before the hostilities broke out, to call for a peaceful solution to the Iraqi crisis, which would preserve the credibility of the Council and the values on which the Charter is based.

Force, indeed, should be the last resort, after all other means for a peaceful settlement have failed. As everyone knows, the philosophy that underpins our Organization requires that all States renounce the unilateral use of force and turn to collective security. Today, we wish to reiterate our faith, more than ever, in the values of peace and tolerance that have guided the founding fathers of our Organization. We believe that collective security is the best means of protecting us against the return of the demons of expansionism and domination.

All international and regional groups have spoken on the Iraqi crisis and its consequences, as well as on the hostilities under way. The Kingdom of Morocco, as an Arab and Muslim country and member of the Non-Aligned Movement, has taken part in these discussions and the stances that resulted from them. The council of the League of Arab States met in Cairo 23 March, the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States clearly spoke on this issue this afternoon.

We are here again today before the Security Council, after the international community has failed in all the efforts it has made for several months to promote a peaceful outcome of the Iraqi crisis, in particular by allowing disarmament inspectors to carry out their tasks to completion.

The entire world has its eyes focused on us, as if it were trying to detect some hope through the curtain of smoke and flames that are released from explosives and bombs. Almost 60 years have elapsed since such a hope was proclaimed widely and loudly in San Francisco. The peoples of the United Nations declared their resolve "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", which twice in the space of a lifetime — this was in 1945 — "brought untold sorrow to mankind".

This is what the peoples of the United Nations expect of us today: to save them from the scourge of war and the suffering it causes. It is up to us all, whoever we may be, every Member of this Organization, the powerful and the others, to get down to this task with a sense of urgency. We cannot resign ourselves to the fatality of death, which blindly strikes innocents, to the fatality of destruction of a land where the earliest traces of our shared memory reside, a land where God called on people to allow the spirit to prevail over instinct and passion.

The discussions of the Council today and tomorrow are crucial, because the future of our Organization depends on them and especially of the vision of the world that they embody. What is that vision? It is that people, despite the diversity of their cultures, beliefs and sensibilities, can always find common ground to save themselves from the scourge of war.

Such common ground, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan has reminded the Council just a few hours ago, consists in the respect for the sovereignty, unity and the territorial integrity of Iraq, as well as in the right of this country, and all others, to choose its own political regime, without foreign interference, and to freely exploit its own resources. Finally, respect for humanitarian law allows for neither exception nor reservation. It is an indispensable body of imperative

rules of international law. I know what I am speaking of here.

Similarly, the solidarity of the international community, to alleviate suffering and help the hungry, the sick or disabled, must go beyond all political and other divisions. It is only in this way that we can preserve our humanity.

We must see to it that this crisis, this tragedy, can be an opportunity for a rebirth, a resurgence of the values of peace and tolerance. But this must be done quickly, very quickly. For "the night is long that never finds the day". Shakespeare was a poet, a humanist, who knew that freedom cannot live side by side with domination.

Mr. Nesho (Albania): We are very concerned about the difficult humanitarian situation in Iraq, which has resulted from the dictatorial policies of a regime that acts against its own people and that, even in its final days, has shown a willingness to sacrifice everything, its own people and country, in order to maintain power. As a member of the coalition of the free countries for the liberation of Iraq, Albania requests that this regime step aside now to spare the people of Iraq from being exposed to further danger and suffering.

Any attempt to protect the lost cause of a regime that is responsible for the destitution and death of millions of Iraqis and other people in the region, in the name of state sovereignty and fear of change, is an attempt that not only frustrates the hopes of a people who long for freedom, but also delays our common action to assist the people of Iraq in overcoming their fragile humanitarian situation.

Albania welcomes the initiative of Secretary-General Kofi Annan to take the necessary measures to reactivate the oil for food programme. We call upon the members of the Security Council to fully support the Secretary-General by providing him with the necessary authority and flexibility to meet the humanitarian needs of the people of Iraq.

The adoption without delay of the resolution on humanitarian assistance to Iraq by this body will serve to restore the efficiency and unity of the Security Council, which is imperative, in view of the most recent events.

Now is the time for our nations and the Security Council to focus on the challenges of the future with the will and the necessary pragmatism that make possible our cooperation.

Albania, as part of the coalition of the willing led by the United States and United Kingdom, together with many countries all over the world, will strive to advance liberty and peace in Iraq. The new Iraq will be democratic and will live in peace; it will no longer be a threat to its neighbours or to the world.

By assuming that responsibility and by fighting for a free world that is not threatened by weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, we will remain faithful to the vision of the founders of the Organization and accomplish its goals. As Winston Churchill once stressed,

> "Make sure that the force of right will, in the ultimate issue, be protected by the right of force."

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Venezuela, on whom I now call.

Mr. Alcalay (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the Security Council for supporting the request made by a group of countries with regard to holding this open debate at a crucial moment that casts a shadow on the future of the United Nations and that of humanity.

The current situation necessitates that each of us urgently shoulder our own responsibilities with regard to the situation in Iraq. It also requires that, in the prevailing situation of anguish and frustration confronting us today, we jointly find a solution that restores the hope of the peoples of the world. The peoples of the world and a majority of its Governments have rejected the use of force against the people of Iraq. They also hope that the Security Council and the United Nations will take the right decisions to enable us to overcome the current conflict.

A solution must be based on unity and must respect the guidelines enshrined in the Charter, whose principal and unshirkable mission is to preserve international peace and security and to ensure respect for human rights and the sovereignty of peoples. Today we must give special consideration to the humanitarian assistance necessary as a consequence of the war that has been started.

Last Sunday, the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, added the voice of our country to those rejecting war in Iraq and calling for peace. In our most recent statement in the Security Council, which we made on 13 March, we

said that the Iraqi crisis had to be dealt with peacefully and diplomatically. We also said that the solution to the conflict had to be in line with international law, and that it should be achieved through diplomacy based on dialogue and agreement, which is the appropriate way to resolve conflicts between nations.

That implies the full implementation of the resolutions that have already been adopted by the Security Council, as well as compliance with the forthcoming resolutions soon to be adopted by it. We believe that there is still time to avoid even worse evils and that there is still room to find peace. But in order to find peace, the Security Council must shoulder its responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security. It must also categorically reject the use of force. The efforts of the Council must therefore be directed towards achieving an immediate ceasefire. The search for peace must guide its actions. Moreover, in addition to caring for the Iraqi people through the provision of humanitarian assistance, we must also put an end to the use of force.

The best humanitarian assistance we could provide today would be to cease hostilities. That would make it possible to return to the search for a diplomatic solution, thereby avoiding the danger bearing down on humanity. Putting an end to military action should be discussed with the same urgency as is employed in discussions of humanitarian assistance. In this regard, we believe that the Secretary-General must immediately make a statement rejecting the use of force. To that end, the United Nations as a whole, and the Security Council in particular, must play their part and adopt the necessary decision to find a solution to the conflict.

In short, we believe that the Council should reaffirm its adherence to international law; ensure that its decisions are respected; urge all parties to continue diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation in Iraq; protect the right of all Iraqis — including minorities — to live in peace and dignity; and, finally, adopt the decisions necessary to provide urgent humanitarian assistance. That assistance must be multilateral and coordinated and should be provided through existing United Nations mechanisms.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Iceland, on whom I now call.

Mr. Ingólfsson (Iceland): Iceland has aligned itself with the statement made by Greece on behalf of the European Union. In addition, Iceland would like to state the following.

Iceland regrets that Iraq has had to face the serious consequences of military action. This would not have been necessary had the Iraqi regime decided to change its attitude and cooperated immediately, actively and fully, as it was obliged to do under resolution 1441 (2002).

The Icelandic Government has given its political support to the coalition of States assembled for the immediate disarmament of Iraq. This is due to our conviction that action was necessary to ensure the implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions regarding the disarmament of Iraq.

We urge Member States of the United Nations to unite in the work ahead and to secure a full United Nations role in providing humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people and in the post-war reconstruction of their country. The Iraqi people need the full support of the international community to be able to rise again in prosperity, democracy, dignity and peaceful co-existence with their neighbours after decades of dictatorship and aggression.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, on whom I now call.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in French*): I would like, first of all, to thank you, Mr. President, for acceding to the request made by the League of Arab States and the Non-Aligned Movement to convene this urgent meeting of the Security Council in order to consider an extremely urgent matter, namely, the war in Iraq. I would also like to thank you and all the members of the Council for honouring my request to participate in this crucial debate. During these difficult and painful times, I would like to wish you every success in guiding the work of the Council during this tumultuous month.

My country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, is closely following the question of Iraq. Like the overwhelming majority of peoples throughout the world, we have always advocated a peaceful solution to this sensitive and complex issue. Indeed, we share the deep conviction of all those who have cautioned against the unpredictable and devastating consequences of the use of force to settle this conflict: enormous material damage, extensive loss of human

life and a negative impact on peace and stability in the Middle East and throughout the world.

In spite of the opposition of the vast majority of the world community, on 20 March 2003 a large-scale military attack was launched against the Republic of Iraq, an independent and sovereign country, member of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the United Nations. We deeply regret that the peaceful path that was still open was abandoned and that, unfortunately, the military option was chosen. This unjustified act of aggression, not mandated by the United Nations, is a serious violation of the Charter and of international law.

In its statement issued on 20 March 2003, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic appealed for an immediate end to this armed attack in order to spare the lives of innocent Iraqi civilians. We continue firmly to believe that a peaceful solution to this conflict, however complex, can still be attained within the framework of the United Nations. Let us give diplomacy a chance, rather than continue to let the weapons roar. According to the latest information from the mass media, the number of innocent civilian victims continues to grow. No less seriously, if the war persists, we should expect a major humanitarian crisis, the consequences of which will be catastrophic.

Before the outbreak of the military conflict, some spoke of a quick war. Many are now talking about the possibility of a lengthy war, no doubt fraught with consequences. In this situation, we can only feel the greatest concern and even anxiety. The international community is therefore called upon to take urgent action to put an immediate end to this war, which has already claimed close to 1,000 victims. If the world should succeed in this noble endeavour, we will have rendered a great service to the Iraqi people, whose unbearable sufferings should be ignored by no one.

Following the end of the bipolar era, many people expressed the hope that it would be possible to build a better world. Since then, Governments and peoples throughout the world have given their all and spared no effort to promote cooperation among States in all possible areas. In a word, this multifarious cooperation has already registered important achievements in many spheres. Is this not a trend in our modern history that should be strongly supported? Cooperation yields benefits. All countries and peoples the world over can only welcome it. On the other hand, war or the use force to settle conflicts brings only destruction, misery, death, resentment, anger and hatred. Together, we should do our utmost and persevere in our efforts to ensure that dialogue and cooperation among States prevail in international relations, thereby helping to preserve world peace and security.

These are the thoughts which my delegation wished to share with this Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Mongolia.

Mr. Choisuren (Mongolia): I would like to express my deep appreciation to you, Sir, for convening this timely open debate on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait.

Mongolia's stance on the issue of the disarmament of Iraq has from the very outset been consistent and prudent. Mongolia has over the years resolutely condemned the production of weapons of mass destruction by the regime of Saddam Hussain, its aggression against neighbouring States and genocide against its own people, and supported all relevant United Nations resolutions and activities. The international community has exerted considerable efforts aimed at resolving the Iraqi issue peacefully. However, the Iraqi regime failed to fully meet its obligations vis-à-vis the United Nations. It is the firm belief of my Government that if the Iraqi leadership had cooperated fully and faithfully and carried out its obligations before the Security Council, the resort to force would have been unnecessary. Thus, the responsibility for the current situation lies with the Iraqi regime.

My delegation shares the view that, at this stage, when the hostilities are in full swing, the humanitarian implications of the war should become the preoccupation of the States Members of the United Nations. With the withdrawal of United Nations personnel from Iraq, the humanitarian oil for food programme has been suspended. The war has further exacerbated the sufferings and hardship of the Iraqi people.

It is time for the international community to look forward, to take immediate and resolute action and to find a way of resuming humanitarian relief to help the Iraqi people. Like many others, the Government and people of Mongolia are deeply concerned by the alarming humanitarian situation in Iraq. We are informed that in the southern city of Basra, over 1.7 million residents have been without water supplies for several days. It has also been stated that epidemics

could very soon spread rapidly because of the hot weather conditions in the region.

Mongolia shares the concerns expressed about the welfare of civilians caught in the conflict, especially children. Urgent efforts should be made to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people. It is quite obvious that significant resources will be needed for this purpose. We consider that relieving the suffering of the Iraqi people in a speedy and efficient manner is the immediate task facing the community of nations.

As we understand it, the United Nations has prepared a major contingency plan and would be able to start its implementation as soon as possible. Under these circumstances, the Security Council should take the lead and give to the Secretary-General the mandate for whatever measures he may need to take in order to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe from happening in Iraq. We urge the members of the Security Council to support the Secretary-General by providing him with authority and flexibility to deal with the emerging crisis. The single-mindedness and resolve of the Security Council on this issue would, hopefully, be a step towards restoring its effectiveness and unity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala has not intervened in the prior debates on this matter. We did, at the time, hail the capacity the Council revealed to bring together support for resolution 1441 (2002). We also noted with mounting concern the divisions that arose around the fundamental question of how to implement it. But we refrained from joining the growing polarization that characterized the positions taken on this burning issue, which gradually transcended the scope of the Council and spilled over to the general membership. Rather, up to the end we nourished the hope that the members of the Council, particularly the permanent members, would find some way of bridging their differences.

Today we are confronting a situation that is altogether different. We understand that it is not realistic to expect this collegial body to look backwards or try to arrest a momentum over which those of us who are not members exert little or no influence. We are fully aware, furthermore, of the risks that would be involved in bringing additional tensions to bear on the sole multilateral body that takes collective decisions on the maintenance of peace. I shall, therefore, confine myself to expressing, with almost telegraphic conciseness, our opinion on three aspects.

First, we are extremely concerned about the humanitarian situation that has arisen in Iraq and in neighboring countries. We would prefer that humanitarian assistance be administered by the United Nations and we unreservedly support the Secretary-General with regard to organizing the provision of assistance to the Iraqi population. We feel that, for now, the programme known as oil for food should continue. We also fully subscribe to the Secretary-General's appeal to the conflicting parties to respect the civilian population, in keeping with international humanitarian law. We agree that, until such time as the United Nations is in a position to act, the exigencies of the circumstances demand that the humanitarian assistance required be provided by the entities that exert control over the affected areas.

Secondly, even though it may be premature to address the post-conflict situation, we think that it will be incumbent upon multilateral agencies, and particularly the United Nations, to play a fundamental role in facilitating a situation in which the Iraqi people themselves make decisions regarding their future. In this respect, we take it as a given that the sovereignty and integrity of the Iraqi nation will not be impaired.

Finally, we reiterate our faith in multilateral agencies and in the unique role of the Security Council. We do not concur with the assessment of some observers who believe that the debate that has taken place within the Council these past few weeks has dealt a mortal blow to that body. This is not the first, nor will it be the last, time that the members of the Council have failed to reach agreement on complex and potentially divisive issues. It would, nevertheless, be naive to think that that debate has not left wounds, even deep wounds, which will require a deliberate effort by all members — I emphasize all — to safeguard the integrity of the Council and preserve this singular body established under the Charter to maintain peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): We had about 78 speakers on our list; 45 have spoken this afternoon. There are still 33 left. Because of the lateness of the hour, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, I propose that I suspend the meeting until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m. I would be grateful to those speakers who will take the floor tomorrow to heed the appeal I made about the length of time for speaking. It should be limited to five minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 8.35 p.m.